This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

**Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

**About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600086345W

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

# SERMONS

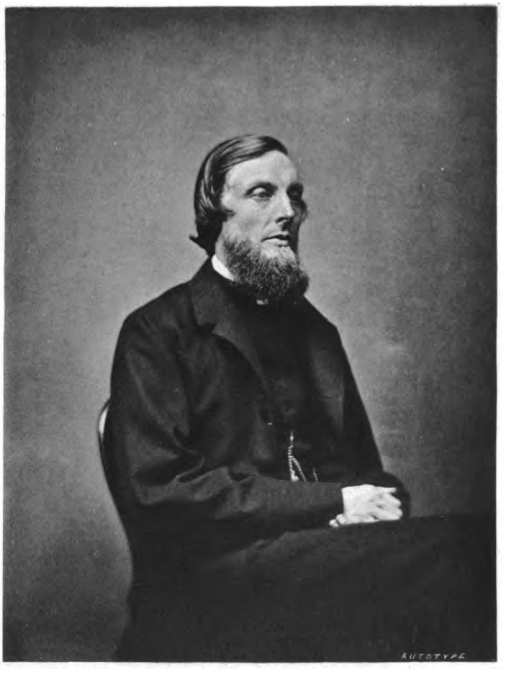
BY THE LATE

H. W. SARGENT, M.A.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Ever your most affec.

Hampden Du Bose.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

# Merton Sundays:

A SELECTION FROM THE

# SERMONS

OF THE LATE

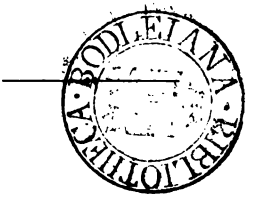
H. W. SARGENT, M.A.

FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE, AND INCUMBENT OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST, OXFORD;

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

P. G. MEDD, M.A.

SENIOR FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, AND FORMERLY CURATE OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST.




Oxford and London:
JAMES PARKER AND CO.
1876.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

# CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION, *p.* xi.

SERMON I.

(p. 1.)

PRAISE.

*Psalm* cxlvii. 1.; *Psalm* l. 23.

SERMON II.

(p. 13.)

REVERENCE.

*St. Luke* xix. 45, 46.

SERMON III.

(p. 28.)

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

*Hebrews* xiii. 5.

SERMON IV.

(p. 40.)

COMMON WORSHIP.

*Hebrews* xiii. 15.

SERMON V.

(p. 51.)

THE CHORAL PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE WORSHIP THE CHARACTERISTIC OF BOTH COVENANTS.

*Psalm* lxviii. 32, 33; *Psalm* cl. 6.

Digitized by Google

SERMON VI.

(p. 67.)

THE ANNUNCIATION.

*St. Luke* i. 28.

SERMON VII.

(p. 79.)

THE INCARNATION.

*St. John* i. 14.

SERMON VIII.

(p. 91.)

THE MAGNIFICAT, I.

*St. Luke* i. 46—48.

SERMON IX.

(p. 104.)

THE MAGNIFICAT, II.

*St. Luke* i. 46, 47.

SERMON X.

(p. 114.)

THE MAGNIFICAT, III.

*St. Luke* i. 50.

SERMON XI.

(p. 126.)

THE ROYAL AND PRIESTLY CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS.

*Revelation* i. 5, 6.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XII.

(p. 142.)

THE CHRISTIAN'S VOCATION.

*Ephesians* iv. 1.

SERMON XIII.

(p. 155.)

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

1 *Corinthians* iv. 1.

SERMON XIV.

(p. 170.)

THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.

*Romans* xii. 1.

SERMON XV.

(p. 182.)

THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER.

*St. Luke* xxii. 15.

SERMON XVI.

(p. 195.)

THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER.

*St. Luke* xxii. 15.

LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

NO. I. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE EARLY CHURCH TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL PRESENCE.

(p. 208.)

Digitized by Google

NO. II. THE TESTIMONY OF THE PRAYER-BOOK TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL PRESENCE.

(p. 222.)

NO. III. THE BENEFITS IMPARTED TO THE FAITHFUL RECEIVER.

(p. 238.)

NO. IV. THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.

(p. 253.)

NO. V. THE MEANS BY WHICH WE SHARE IN THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

(p. 269.)

NO. VI. PREPARATION OF HEART NECESSARY FOR THE DUE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

(p. 284.)

SERMON XVII.

(p. 296.)

SELF-DENIAL.

*St. Matthew* xvi. 25.

SERMON XVIII.

(p. 305.)

GROWTH IN GRACE GRADUAL.

2 *St. Peter* iii. 18.

SERMON XIX.

(p. 319.)

INWARD PURIFICATION.

1 *St. John* iii. 3.

Digitized by Google

SERMON XX.

(p. 332.)

THE MEANS OF ATTAINING TO INCREASED PERFECTION.

*St. Matthew* v. 48.

SERMON XXI.

(p. 345.)

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

*Hebrews* ix. 27.

SERMON XXII.

(p. 359.)

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

*Amos* iv. 12.

SERMON XXIII.

(p. 371.)

CASTING OUR CARE UPON GOD.

1 *St. Peter* v. 7.



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

# INTRODUCTION.

IT is now nine years since the death of the Rev. Harry Walter Sargent; and it is felt that some explanation may perhaps be needed, after such an interval, of the publication of these Sermons. They were, indeed, never intended to be published: and it was only on the strong united solicitation (now two years ago) of many who had heard them, and knew and loved the writer, that consent was given by Mr. Sargent's nearest relatives for their publication. They will serve, it is thought, as a memorial of one whose beautiful life and character, whose holy teaching, and whose direction of the well-ordered, reverent, and edifying services which grew up under his fostering care in "Merton Chapel," (for him and for his people their "Parish Church of St. John the Baptist,") are, it is plain, still affectionately cherished by those who had the privilege of knowing them.

Charged, as a Clerical Fellow of Merton College, with the pastoral care of the small parish of St. John's, numbering in itself scarcely more than 120 souls, he yet felt it his duty to offer to Almighty God, and to them, of his very best. He was one of those to whom the thought, "O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts," "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thine

Digitized by Google

honour dwelleth," was an ever-present aspiration. In his case a truly devout mind, joined with a refined musical skill, and a genuine artistic sense, found its natural and happy exercise in a loving care of all the accessories of Divine Service, which was yet chastened by that perfect taste which sees in simplicity the first necessary element of true sublimity and grandeur. From these springs in his heart and mind there gradually uprose, from small beginnings, that solemn and stately parochial Choral Service, which for several years was the delight of so many of the residents in the City and in the University of Oxford, and which has made "Merton Chapel" a household word to hundreds now scattered far and wide in England and in the world.

To one who counts it among the chief of the many happinesses of his prolonged Oxford life to have been associated with Harry Sargent in this his holy work, from its small beginnings onwards to its premature end, it is a deep pleasure, though one necessarily tinged with sadness, (as indeed what retrospects of life are not?) to recal to his own recollection and to that of others, by way of Introduction to this volume of Sermons preached in Merton Chapel, some features of that work, of its progress, its development, and its influence. As I do so, how vividly do

> "Those other days come back to me
> With recollected music, though the tone
> Is changed and solemn."

Digitized by Google

Oxford is much changed since first I knew it, and Undergraduates and Junior Fellows of the present generation could hardly understand the force with which its religious and ecclesiastical tone, then a dominant one among its many-sided influences, told upon so many of its children five-and-twenty years ago. This subtle power was in its very air, and seemed to breathe from its very walls on young and susceptible hearts, especially on those who had been dedicated from early years to the Ministry of the Church of England. To such, Oxford was our Jerusalem, our Sion; and we loved—we love still—to "go round about her and to tell the towers thereof." Not its centuries alone of old historic association, nor the memories alone of those great names in England's Church which are for ever bound up with its great collegiate foundations, but its actual architectural beauty also, contributed largely to this complex effect; and, with the feeling of the Athenian of old towards his glorious city, we became "lovers of the beauty" of our Alma Mater. And among all the College Chapels of Oxford there is no nobler specimen of Christian Art than that which is the parent of them all, that exquisite example of Decorated Gothic which Walter de Merton built for his "band of white-robed scholars," still reserving the rights of the Parish of St. John Baptist, the site of whose ancient Parish Church it occupied.

When Harry Sargent entered on his Incumbency in 1854, the Chapel had not long been restored and

Digitized by Google

decorated under the able and appreciative care of Mr. Butterfield, and the stately proportions of its sanctuary, and of the cross transept which practically served as its nave, seemed to call for a worship worthy of a building, which for solemnity of devotional effect is perhaps unequalled by any of its size.

In the endeavour to provide such a worship, to the honour and glory of Almighty God, and for the spiritual advantage of such as might be able to avail themselves of it, I was permitted to take a part during eleven years, for the last eight of which I was formally licensed to the curacy of St. John's, having, latterly, the valuable assistance of the Rev. Sackett Hope, of Queen's College, as my colleague in that office.

Our beginnings, as I have said, were small, as small as a harmonium and ten or twelve little boys, who were carefully trained, not in music only, but in the principles and practice of the Christian religion, (especially as they drew near to the age for Confirmation,) by Mr. Sargent himself. He generally practised them, in those early days, in one of his own college rooms, which, in default of the vestry or sacristy properly belonging to the Chapel, but not yet, alas, restored to its proper sacred use, served us for a vestry-room; and thence our humble procession at first wended its way through the inner quadrangle of the College, and under the pointed archways of the old Library quadrangle, to the door of the southern transept.

Digitized by Google

It was of course up-hill work; more or less so, indeed, from first to last; for anything more than a very dull and perfunctory service for the few Parishioners of St. John's was, as yet, unusual. All indeed who knew Harry Sargent loved and honoured him, whether quite agreeing with his Church ways or not. Still, unwonted energy and care in things religious is never, at any rate at first, universally acceptable, and so there were those in whose ears the sound of even Merton's silvery bells at unaccustomed and more frequent hours was not altogether grateful.

It had been customary for the parochial congregation to use the Ante-Chapel for their services, but during the three years from 1856 to 1859, a special permission was granted each year by the Warden and Fellows for the use of the Chapel itself by Mr. Sargent and his flock. The central space of the choir was temporarily seated with chairs, the easternmost bay of the stalls on each side being reserved for the clergy and surpliced singers; while the pulpit was placed just beyond the stalls, close to the north wall. Our first vestry was a small space, screened off by a heavy curtain, in the eastern angle of the south transept; the rest of the space of both transepts being as yet unfurnished, except with a few old oak stalls of Jacobean date under the west window, and the Font in the north transept. Neither the choir nor transepts were lighted with gas; and on the occasions, rare in so small a parish, when the

Digitized by Google

Sacrament of Baptism had to be administered, the party round the font had to be indebted to the light of two large tapers, carried by two of the older choristers, who, after the Second Lesson, headed the procession of choir and clergy from the chancel into the unlighted transept.

It was in the year 1859 that the feeling above alluded to, on the part of some of the members of the College, found expression in a resolution which compelled the Parish to return from the chancel to the nave. On this occasion the following passage from the close of a Sermon preached on October 30, 1859, was printed for circulation among the congregation :—

"Before I conclude, I wish to say a few words in reference to a communication which has already been made to you by means of a printed notice. By that notice you will have learned that the privilege of holding our Parochial Services in the choir of this church will cease to be ours after next Sunday. It will be in the recollection of many members of this congregation, that previous to the year 1856, these Services were always held in the ante-chapel; and that it was only by the express permission of the College, that they were transferred to the choir. As leave for the use of this part of the church has not been renewed for the coming year, it follows that we must meet for worship, after the time specified, as in former years, in the ante-chapel.

"I am quite sure that all who have attended these Services during the last three years, are very sensible that the enjoyment of them has been greatly enhanced by the

Digitized by Google

convenience and beauty of the building in which they have assembled. I feel equally sure that they are grateful for that enjoyment, and I trust that we shall one and all evince that gratitude by a cheerful and ready acquiescence in the change that is about to take place, however painful it must be to us in some respects. No doubt we cannot help regretting that the greater portion of our Services must henceforth be carried on in a less beautiful, and in some ways less convenient, part of this building; but I beg you to observe and to take comfort from this, that the Services themselves,—and *they* surely are what we ought to value above all things—will continue precisely the same. Our strains of praise and thanksgiving will ascend from the same choir of singers, and, I trust, from as large a body as ever of united worshippers. Our weekly Communions, that choicest of blessings, will continue as usual; and then, as heretofore, those who are found worthy, will be invited to draw near to this Inner Sanctuary; our Saints' day Services will not vary; and I trust that when the proposed arrangements for the convenience and comfort of the congregation have been effected, we shall find that the mere local change will detract less than we expected from the enjoyment of the Services.

"My brethren, I would ask you to call to mind the reason why we ought chiefly to value these Services. Is it because they bring us into a building which is beautiful to look upon? is it for the sake of the mere enjoyment of musical sounds, or on account of any little merit which these Services may claim in a musical point of view?—I answer, it is for no such reasons that these Services should be chiefly valued by us; all these are merely secondary reasons; the one chief reason which should lead us to value them is this, that we believe and feel that they set before us the highest and most perfect type of worship

Digitized by Google

according to the principles of Christ's Holy Church; and exhibit, in its entirety, the ritual of that branch of it to which we, as members of the Church in England, belong. If, then, we value these principles, (and these Services have failed in their purpose if they have not taught us to do so,) if, I say, we value these principles, of which these Services are the exponent, we shall not neglect them because it is God's will that they be transferred to what is, after all, only a less beautiful portion of this glorious church. Rather shall we be more regular, more constant, more eager in our attendance, in order to bear witness to the truth of the principles which we profess, and which we have learned by inward experience to value and to love. We shall accept this crossing of our wills with patience and cheerfulness; we shall go on as before full of faith, and hope, and trustful love, seeking the Lord in His appointed ordinances, and believing that nothing but the unholy passions and unkind tempers of our unrenewed hearts can hide Him from our eyes, or deprive us of the blessed visitations of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

"H. W. SARGENT."

What seemed unfriendly, really led to the more complete development of the Service, and that in correcter form. The choir-boys and men, now about twenty-four in number, were removed to a *chorus cantorum* constructed under the tower, immediately eastward of the west window. The vestry was transferred from the south transept to the space between the font and the door in the north transept; the whole of the south transept was covered with floor-cloth, and provided with chairs; and, in lieu of the harmonium, a very fine organ by Hill, occupied the

Digitized by Google

space between the font and the choir-stalls. Of how that organ was handled, first by Dr. Hayne as organist and choir-master, and then, after we lost his invaluable services (not in those capacities only, but as one of the assistant clergy), by Dr. Stainer, the great subsequent reputations of both those gentlemen renders it unnecessary, (it would, indeed, be presumptuous,) for me to speak. Their scientific and sympathising help, loyally given, in Dr. Hayne's case, notwithstanding a dislike to Gregorian music, contributed most essentially to the perfection which was reached in the musical part of the service; and no frequenter of Merton Chapel, in those its palmy days, will ever forget the expressive beauty of their varying organ accompaniments to the grand old tones, which were themselves sung in unison. The recollection of the Ambrosian *Te Deum*, of Marbeck's Creed, of the perfectly-sung metrical hymns, and of the musical portions of the Communion Service (for which we latterly adopted some beautiful compositions of Dr. Hayne's), must be cherished by most of those who regularly frequented the church in the years from 1860 to 1867. In anthems, happily, we indulged but seldom; for the *motif* of the service (and it was in this feature of it that I principally delighted), was the congregational and parochial, and not the cathedral, idea. And though I may be partial in my review of the characteristics of a work in which it was my great privilege to share, I cannot help thinking that the Merton Service

Digitized by Google

realized very nearly the highest type of parish worship, and that in days when such instances were comparatively rare. I even venture to say that it helped greatly to set the tone, and to form and fix the taste, in such matters, of many who have since, in many different and widely-distant localities, contributed to the present very general improvement in everything connected with religious worship. The sons of Oxford disperse to, as they are gathered from, all quarters of the globe; and I know that the memories of Merton, and of Mr. Sargent, are affectionately cherished still in the hearts of many whom secular business or missionary labour have settled in Canada, in India, in Southern Africa, and in remoter parts elsewhere.

Perhaps the most important of the observable effects of my dear friend's ministry, while it lasted, was the large number of devout communicants who were drawn to St. John's from among the Undergraduate members of the University. Choral Celebrations were rare in those days, even in cathedrals; and in college chapels Celebrations of any kind were only too infrequent. Considerable improvement has happily taken place in this respect of late; and the more devout among the residents in Oxford Colleges are not now compelled to seek the Bread of Life in other than their own college chapels, if they wish to communicate more than once a Term. But fifteen or twenty years ago the Merton Services filled a gap in this respect; and

Digitized by Google

very remarkable was it, especially as contrasted with the usual experience of parish Priests, to take part in Celebrations in which the number of the male communicants was greater than that of the female, and to see uplifted for the Sacred Elements palms that bore evident traces of familiarity with the cricket-bat and the oar.

In reviewing the history of Mr. Sargent's Incumbency of St. John's, two occasions, besides that of our exodus from the chancel to the nave, stand out prominently in my recollection. Of these, the more important was the opening Service of the Church Congress of 1862, the first (after a small and comparatively private meeting at Cambridge the year before,) of those annual gatherings of Clergy and Laity which have since been so helpful in giving a new impulse to Church-work in the different localities in which they have been held. It was an early Celebration; and Bishop Wilberforce,—whose able presidency, in the great Theatre at Oxford, started on a career of success a movement which was then untried, and for which all sorts of hindrances and difficulties were anticipated,—was the Celebrant. Great and anxious efforts, in the face of much discouragement at first, had been made by those on whom the preparations for the proposed experiment had devolved, and they were earnestly desirous of impressing upon it from the first a really religious character. With that view a daily Communion, as well as daily

Digitized by Google

Matins and Evensong, had been arranged at convenient hours for the members of the Congress in St. John's Church. That first solemn gathering, of a large number of the clergy especially, in the early morning of Tuesday, July 8, was felt to be an augury of the complete success which followed.

The other, and earlier, occasion was, in like manner, the first launching of a movement, then new, which has taken larger proportions since, and has found its natural home in the Cathedral of the Diocese,—the annual festival gathering of the choirs in union with the Oxford Diocesan Choral Association. The first meeting of this kind was held in Merton Chapel on the 5th of October, 1861. The chancel was filled with a surpliced choir of clergy, men, and boys, nearly 300 strong; the transepts were occupied by a close-packed but attentive congregation, which pressed close to the brass gates of the choir. The service was glorious, especially the *Our Fathers*, *the Creed*, and the *Amens;* and the sight which the Chapel presented from the steps of the Altar, at the collection of the Offertory, will never fade from my recollection.

Our beautiful Services, had they survived till now, would, most happily, be no longer so nearly exceptional among parish Services, certainly not in Oxford, as they were then. But it will be allowed to have been a pardonable satisfaction which their promoters and supporters felt in finding that, on such special

Digitized by Google

occasions as I have described, our Church was naturally selected as best able to provide such special religious Services as might be needed.

The recollections of the many frequenters of the parish Services in Merton Chapel during Mr. Sargent's Incumbency, will enable them to recal various other occasions,—such as Confirmations and First Communions, the Special Lenten Services, (at which the use, now not uncommon, of the *Miserere* and the latter part of the Commination Service, was first introduced,) or Special Sermons by distinguished preachers,—which, although of inferior public interest, added greatly to the debt of gratitude which they must all feel to him whose zeal, and taste, and liberality rendered them possible, and whose memory will ever be affectionately cherished by all who had the happiness of knowing him.

I have spoken chiefly hitherto of the musical side of my dear friend's work in the development of a nearly perfect Service. The volume to which these words are introductory will prove sufficiently that that was by no means the only, or the chief side of that work. His life and his pulpit-teaching were truly and deeply Catholic and Christian, and those who knew him best will acknowledge their deep indebtedness to his example, and personal influence, and not least to his direct instruction. The Sermons which follow are a selection from a large number which he left behind, and from which three times the number, and of equal quality,

Digitized by Google

might easily have been given. Some of those now published, I cannot but think, have a permanent and intrinsic value of their own of a practical kind: as, for example, the course which will be found in this volume (Lent Lectures, Nos. I.—VI.) on the teaching of the Holy Eucharist. But the whole, it is believed, will be a welcome gift to many who heard them; and they will be a standing monument to them and to others of the work for which he lived; a work, which, though together with himself it "seemed to die," lives still in the widely-diffused influence of which it was the centre.

P. G. MEDD.

NORTH CERNEY RECTORY,
CIRENCESTER,
*July, 1876.*

Digitized by Google

# SERMON I.

## Praise.

PSALM cxlvii. 1.

*"O praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God: yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful."*

PSALM l. 23.

*"Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me."*

NOTHING can tend more to impress us with the general coldness and flatness of our love to God, than a careful study of the Book of Psalms. When we read those inspired songs we are struck at once with a spirit of earnestness and devotion far beyond the common experience of our own hearts; we cannot help feeling that the sentiments they express, glowing as they do with such fire of love, are unreal in our mouths, and we almost hesitate to adopt them, lest in so doing we should profane them. Every one I think must have experienced some such feelings as these with respect to the Psalms. Whether it be a strain of joy, or woe, the humble confession of sin, the thanksgiving for deliverance, or the praise of God's majesty and goodness, they each and all bespeak the deepest and



Digitized by Google

purest love to God. There would seem to have been no alloy in the feelings that animated those holy psalmists; no half-surrender of the affections, but such an entire abstraction from the things of earth as made them most keenly susceptible to heavenly influence.

But, although all the Psalms shame us by their earnestness and warmth, yet it is those which extol God's goodness and mercy, and speak to Him in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, that make us feel most acutely how little our hearts are attuned to such heavenly themes. Doubtless, the penitential Psalms pour forth feelings which many have never known at all, and very few in their full meaning; but yet altogether they are more familiar to us than the offering of Praise. When in trouble, we are glad to have our fears and sorrows shaped into words; we feel, then, that we are nearer to God, that His hand is upon us, and we readily adopt the Psalmist's words of trust and penitence, and strong cryings for mercy and forgiveness. Our necessities bring us to our knees; our sins, fears, sorrows, the thought of death,—these bring us down upon the earth. Such prayer may be, and often is, no more than the cry of self in pain or terror. Even in sincere and religious minds, prayer is the ready utterance of a burdened and troubled heart. The memory of disobedience, a sense of personal sinfulness, a desire of forgiveness, repentance and the love of God, drive us day by day to Him. Such

Digitized by Google

Psalms, then, as take the form of petitions to the Almighty for mercies of any kind, will be sure to find a more ready response in our hearts. For to pray when in trouble, or even to live in the practice of habitual prayer is easy and familiar to us compared with the duty of praising God. Here it is that we find the heart more particularly lagging behind, and unwilling to acknowledge the sentiments which our words convey. And so it is that such Psalms as that from which the text is taken are less highly valued by us, and less frequently dwelt on. And yet, if we turn to God's chosen people of old, the voice of praise is frequently heard amongst them. Joy and gladness filled their hearts, and ever and anon burst forth into words, as God's mercies gave occasion for it. Thus, on their deliverance from the Egyptian pursuers, we read, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel their song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." And again, when David brought up the ark from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David, we read, "that he went with gladness, and danced before the Lord; and he

Digitized by Google

and the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpets." And again, in the sixty-eighth Psalm, "It is well seen, O God, how thou goest: how Thou, my God and King, goest in the Sanctuary. The singers go before, and minstrels follow after: in the midst are the damsels playing on the timbrels."

These passages, and numberless others, shew us tender and loving hearts, pouring forth their feelings in the voice of praise. They set before us men actually rejoicing with pure and unaffected simplicity, in Him whom they believed to be the Author and Giver of their blessings.

How is it that this spirit of praise has so died out amongst ourselves? How is it that to bless and magnify God's Holy Name is such a strange and ungrateful task to us?

We shall best answer these questions by considering what state of heart is necessary to excite us to praise.

First, then, it must be a state of deep thankfulness for blessings already received. There is no doubt that, in a general way, almost all men are ready to express themselves as thankful to God for their blessings. They are ready to allow that on the whole they have much to be thankful for; but it is just because they think and speak of their blessings in this loose, general way, that they derive no real and definite sense of thankfulness from them. It is impossible to feel grateful for what we do not

Digitized by Google

realize to ourselves as a cause of gratitude. Until we are really conscious of the particular blessings bestowed on us, and acknowledge them singly, we cannot hope to feel any sincere thankfulness for them. Take, for example, the spiritual blessings vouchsafed us; our deliverance from sin and new birth unto holiness in Baptism, the renewing and converting influence of God's Holy Spirit, and the blessed food of the Body and Blood of our crucified Redeemer; or if we look to our mere bodily life, how many are the blessings showered down on us,—life, health, happiness, the peace and quiet of home, domestic joys; or restoration from sickness, danger, and the gates of the grave; and the numberless, and therefore nameless, blessings and gifts of this world and the next, both for the body and for the soul, of which our life is full.

Now the great difference in men is this, that numbers receive all these things as matters of course, without any conscious recognition of the gift as such, or of the Giver; while others are able in each and every blessing to discern the hand of God, to feel that each is a sign and token of His love and Fatherly care for them. The first regard their life as a whole as following the course God's Providence marked out for it at the beginning, but they have no idea of the separate and distinct acts of God's care. They only think of themselves as *on the whole* the objects of Divine Love. They cannot fix that feeling, or realize it to any purpose, because

Digitized by Google

they are conscious of no particular blessings with which to connect it. And it necessarily follows, that this vague and unsatisfactory view of God's personal superintendence of them gradually produces a state of insensibility: they become less and less mindful of our dependence on God for all we have: they take God's gifts not only as matters of course, but as matters of right; they become impatient at any interference with them, and when the hand of God that gave them claims them again as His own, they murmur, and feel as if they were defrauded. Now it is evident that such a state of heart must be a stranger to all aspirations of praise; it has not yet learned for what God is to be praised. A man of such a heart does not even see any great reason to thank God for His benefits, how much less shall he recognise the duty of pouring forth hymns of praise. This, then, is one reason why we are so backward in availing ourselves of this our highest privilege. We are none of us sufficiently filled with the spirit of conscious gratitude. We do not take account of the numberless acts of God's mercy separately, one by one. We are not careful, still less anxious, to recognise the working of God's Providence; we prefer, when we can, to attribute our blessings entirely to secondary causes, without looking any further back. And so we have cold and thankless hearts, hearts full of care and fretful anxiety, pining for what they have lost, grasping at what is before them, taking all as if it were their own, never satisfied, and

Digitized by Google

pure strangers to holy joy,—that gladness and thankfulness of heart that issues in the praise and honour of God.

But, once more, if we would learn to praise God, we must encourage a deep sense of our own unworthiness. As long as men will not seek, by prayer and meditation, to become sensible that, whatever may be their natural endowments, their disposition, or their power of self-control, they are indebted to God's Fatherly compassion for everything, they must take an utterly false view of all God's blessings. They cannot fail to regard every gift as a matter of right; and thus the creature, he who derives his very being from God, and whose life is sustained by His hand, actually makes claims upon the Creator. Even in the days of his purity and innocence man existed by the free mercy of God, and received His gifts as tokens of His love; how, then, shall it be with him in his fallen and degraded state? Is he not as a condemned criminal, pardoned by the compassionate love of his God and Saviour? Is he not a suppliant for mercy? Surely, then, the very smallest, equally with the greatest, of our blessings is the fruit of God's love, and a token of His forgiveness.

If this were impressed upon us as it ought to be, it would add tenfold to the value of the blessings received. As it is now, we value them only for their own sakes, and in so far as they advance our interests, or contribute to our comfort. In our pride,

Digitized by Google

too, and self-conceit, we value them often as the fruits of our own schemings and calculations, and as proofs of our cleverness: we are flattered by our success, and, forgetting Him by whose aid alone our efforts succeeded, we glory simply in the result. But did we accept these blessings as free gifts of love from God, what comfort and peace they would bring with them. Their own intrinsic value would seem small to us in comparison of that providential care of which they are the tokens. A sense of our own unworthiness would at once effect this change, and reveal to us ourselves, and our brethren, as the objects of God's tenderest compassion. Every blessing would then be a pledge of that love that supports and sustains us even in our sins. And our very daily bread would be to us as a continual remembrance of our heavenly Father's never-ending and changeless affection. And thus, the more we become conscious of our unworthiness, the more God's blessings would increase in value. Instead of living in the spirit of proud, cheerless self-reliance, which must end in disappointment and misery, we should rejoice in the gifts which we possess, and look with confidence to the future, knowing that He who has cared for us hitherto, ever has His loving eye upon us, and directs every circumstance of our lives to our ultimate good. Our hearts would become calm, contented, and resigned; we should learn really to love God when we felt that He was the Giver of all that gladdens and cheers us, the very fountain

Digitized by Google

and source of all grace and joy. We should long to render thanks to Him to whom we owe so much, to pay Him the glad homage of the lips; and thus, beginning with words of thanksgiving, we should end in blessing and praise.

And remember, my brethren, by cultivating such a frame of mind we shall be fitting ourselves for the performance of our highest duty as Christians. To praise God is our highest duty, our highest privilege. We pray, because we are sinners, and need God's pardon and assistance; it is an outward acknowledgment of our sinfulness and helplessness, of our fall from the estate of blessedness and innocence in which we were created. But praise is angels' work; it belongs to those who stand around the throne of God, it is the privilege of those who are perfect, and enjoying the love and fellowship of Almighty God. And we, their brethren on earth, because through Christ we have been raised up to heaven, and through Him are enabled to cultivate the dispositions belonging to the inhabitants of heaven, are permitted also to take our part in that privilege. Here on earth we join the unseen choirs of angels on high, in singing to the praise and glory of God, that we may be fit and prepared to sing His praises before His throne hereafter. Prayer, then, will have an end, when this life of endless wants and infirmities comes to an end; but the praises of God, which are even now sung in poor and feeble strains, shall never cease to be heard,

Digitized by Google

and death shall only summon us to join in songs more pure and perfect, and, with the multitude of the heavenly host, to sing eternal Hallelujahs to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Such, then, are two of the most important sources of that spirit of praise which breathes throughout so many of the Psalms. And it is our deficiency in these points that has made us so dead to its influence. And yet, surely at this time, if ever, those feelings which engender that spirit, should be uppermost in our minds. Our standing, as we do this day, upon the border of two years, both that which is gone from us, and that on which we are entering, calls on us to reflect on our condition as God's creatures, depending on His love and compassion. Such great divisions of our life are doubtless intended as remembrances of Him who has ordered that days, and nights, and seasons should follow each other in an appointed order.

We cannot, whether we would or no, divest our minds of thoughts of the past and the future; thoughts which involuntarily lead us up to Him who is the Author of every good and perfect gift. And most surely such thoughts must be of an humbling and chastening character. As we think of the past year, with all its sins and follies, our time wasted, our opportunities neglected and unimproved, our hearts so little removed from earthly joys, surely we cannot but be conscious of our unworthiness in

Digitized by Google

God's sight; we cannot but feel that we have tried God's loving mercy and forbearance to the uttermost. Our sins quickly pass away from our recollection; whatever they may be, we forget them readily; events crowd so thickly upon us that they seem to hide each other. But such seasons as these make us halt for a moment in our course, and thrust us back upon the past. They remind us that life, although made up of minutes, and hours, and days, and years, with separate thoughts and actions filling in each, is yet but one undivided whole; that every portion of it has an influence on the rest, and that sins and follies, which may seem trifling, and are easily forgotten as separate acts, need, when gathered together in the long and fearful reckoning, no slight repentance and self-abasement. Such thoughts must make us conscious of our unworthiness. And upon that comes the thought of the many blessings, which, in spite of our sins, have not been withheld from us; of the mercies with which God has crowned our days, the evils He has turned aside, the perils through which He has brought us safely.

Thus, at this time, I say, if ever, our hearts should be attuned to the strain of praise and thanksgiving. Now that reflection on our past lives, the remembrance of sins committed, of blessings bestowed, and life still preserved, has made us conscious of our unworthiness in God's sight, and our entire dependence on His mercy;—*now*, if ever, without unreality, we may find expression for our feelings in

Digitized by Google

that most beautiful of the Psalms, the 103rd, which, like a still, clear brook, pours forth the strain of praise and blessing: "Praise the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me praise His holy Name. Praise the Lord, O my soul: and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thy sin: and healeth all thine infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction: and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: making thee young and lusty as an eagle. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: long-suffering, and of great goodness. He will not alway be chiding: neither keepeth He His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses. For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth: so great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him. Look how wide also the east is from the west: so far hath He set our sins from us. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children: even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him. For He knoweth whereof we are made: He remembereth that we are but dust. O praise the Lord, ye angels of His, ye that excel in strength: ye that fulfil His commandment, and hearken unto the voice of His words. O praise the Lord, all ye his hosts: ye servants of His that do His pleasure. O speak good of the Lord, all ye works of His, in all places of His dominion: praise thou the Lord, O my soul."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON II.

## Reverence.

ST. LUKE xix. 45, 46.

"*He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.*"

IT is not a little remarkable that both the beginning and end of our Lord's Ministry should have been characterized by an act of just severity in vindication of the respect and reverence due to the holy Temple. The second chapter of St. John's Gospel informs us of our Lord's going up for the first time, after the opening of His Ministry, to keep the Passover at Jerusalem; and relates how, on entering the Temple on that occasion, His holy zeal was so roused by the profane buying and selling carried on within its sacred precincts, that His Divine power flashed out for a moment, and caused all who were engaged in the unholy traffic to shrink away from His Presence. "And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves,

Digitized by Google

Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise."

Well-nigh three years passed away, during which, as we know, our Lord was engaged in establishing the principles of inward purity and holiness; in teaching men to look beyond the outward form and ceremony, to the inward condition of the heart; in enlarging men's views of their relation to each other, and preparing them for that freedom from the burden of ordinances, and the restrictions of times and places, which the Gospel was gradually to impart. And now at the close of His Ministry, the time being at hand when He should be delivered up to death, He goes up once more to eat the Passover with His disciples. As He draws near, and the city and Temple in all their magnificence break upon His view, the terrible doom, which He knew to be impending over them, excited His divine compassion; and He weeps over them as He looked onward into the time when they should be laid even with the ground, and one stone should not be left upon another. But there was a more melancholy sight yet awaiting Him. For if the distant prospect of that city, as it lay stretched out before Him in all its beauty, awakened our Lord's pity, as He forecasted the punishment which was to fall upon all its inhabitants, — the scene which presented itself to Him as He entered the city itself, even in its most hallowed spot, was sufficient to confirm the awful declaration, that the time of trial was drawing to an

Digitized by Google

end, and that the things belonging to their peace were gradually being hid from this hardened and worldly people, in whom the main principles of religion, the fear and love of God, had been darkened by pride, self-will, and covetousness.

For three years had He taught His doctrines of inward holiness, and lifted up His warning voice against the corruptions and hollow professions of the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees; and yet, at the end of that three years, when He draws near to the Temple,—that hallowed building, which He had already cleansed from pollution, which had been set up on the sacred mount to be the cherished object of His people's love and veneration, as reminding them of the Presence of God amongst them,—He finds even there the outward signs of that deep-rooted covetousness and utter blindness to the true nature of God, which were gradually leading them to their ruin.

Teaching and warning by words and acts have equally been thrown away. The very Temple was turned into a market-place, the buyers and sellers are still within the sacred precincts of the Temple, carrying on their unhallowed traffic, and presenting to every devout and earnest mind a spectacle full of horror and disgust. But in order to understand the full guilt of this, you must know how each pious Israelite was taught to regard the Temple. It was to him the habitation of God,—the place wherein God had promised especially to manifest

Digitized by Google

His Presence. It is true that, apart from the Temple, he could think of God as essentially present throughout the whole universe. But did he desire to hold communion with Him, to become conscious of His Presence with himself as an individual, to contemplate the Divine Being as hearkening to His prayers, and pouring forth His gracious influences upon him according to his own peculiar needs and circumstances, his thoughts were at once carried to the Temple. In that sacred building he could think of God as locally present: as the Great Being whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, dwelling personally, like a father with his family, in the midst of His favoured people. This, brethren, was the reason why the Temple at Jerusalem was considered so holy, and guarded so carefully from the slightest taint of outward pollution. It was THE House of God,—the one place wherein He had set His Name; though the original ark of the covenant had long since perished, it was still the one standing token of His Presence, and of His rule and authority over His people.

This sacred building then, for which every Jew did not hesitate to profess the deepest veneration, and which the more devout and earnest regarded with feelings of the tenderest and most reverent affection, was being polluted by the coarse, common traffic of the streets. Surely such conduct indicated the extent to which the decay of all true religious earnestness and sensibility had proceeded.

Digitized by Google

It proved that as a people they were cutting themselves off from that great and All-loving Being whose Presence they had ceased to realize or to reverence: to whom, indeed, they were still willing to offer the outward sacrifice of burnt-offerings, but would not yield that which alone could make it acceptable, the sacrifice of an humble, trustful spirit, full of love and godly fear. No wonder, then, that the holy anger of our Lord was kindled at the insult thus offered to the Divine Majesty; and that at the close, as at the opening of His ministry, He punished by acts of unusual severity this want of reverence due to the Temple as God's House; condemning them at the same time by the words of their own prophet, saying that His house was "a house of prayer," but that they had made it "a den of thieves."

But, my brethren, striking and forcible as was the lesson conveyed to the Jews by this transaction, it is impossible to conceive that its application is confined to them, or that the great principle which it asserts, of the reverence due to outward objects as associated with God and His Presence, is not one which enters into the Christian as well as the Jewish faith. The Jewish Temple, which was twice freed by our Lord from those who were profaning it, was, as He Himself had foretold, doomed to destruction. The time would soon come when, with all the rest of the devoted city, it would be laid even with the ground; when everything merely Jewish would have



Digitized by Google

passed away; and therefore we can hardly conceive that our Lord's acts of holy zeal had reference so much to the building itself, and to its preservation from pollution, as to the assertion of a great principle, and to the enforcing of an all-important warning, which should be applicable to all people and to all ages: that principle being this,—that reverence is due to outward objects in virtue of their use or appointment; the warning,—that such duty of reverence cannot be neglected without incurring the Divine displeasure. Let us, then, consider how this principle applies to the Christian religion, and to the circumstances in which we live.

Now, brethren, it is natural for us to turn from the consideration of the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem, to which God had confined the promise of His Presence, to our Christian Churches, those consecrated buildings amongst ourselves, wherein we seek to hold communion with Him. The circumstances connected with the two are indeed in many respects very different. Among the Jews, according to God's appointment, there could be but one Temple, which, whilst it symbolized to them the great doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, was a common centre in which the aspirations and longings of all devout hearts might meet, with the assurance of the favour of the one true God. Thus, as the Jews were a single, separate nation, so had they one single Temple, in which alone their highest acts of worship could be celebrated, and the special Presence of the Lord could

Digitized by Google

be sought. But as the Gospel was to break down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, and access, through the blood of the Redeemer, was to be afforded to all men without distinction to the great Creator of heaven and earth, so the worship of God was no longer to be confined to one country or one city. The hill of Zion, so endeared to the Jewish people, could no longer claim to be the one sole point of attraction; for the time was come when in all places men should worship God in spirit and in truth; the time was come when in every city and every village men should hold the closest and most intimate communion with their Lord, in those holy places wherein He would set His Name. But remember, the Temple of Zion in all its magnificence was held in highest honour and reverence, not on account of its external value, but on account of that special Presence of the Almighty which dwelt within it. It was God's House, His habitation, wherein He vouchsafed to dwell, and therefore it could not be too highly venerated. All the rich and varied productions of the earth, gold and silver and precious stones, were but the faintest expression of the honour due to it, as the presence-chamber of the Lord of Hosts.

And as with the Jewish Temple so with each Christian Church; it is the place wherein God has set His Name. It is the place wherein, when we meet together for holy worship, God is, by a special promise, in the midst of us; wherein He comes to

Digitized by Google

bless us with His gracious influences, and teaches us to realize, after a far more awful, because in more intimate and heavenly manner, the truth and blessedness of His Presence amongst us.

For, my brethren, we must ever remember that, as Christians, we have been brought very much nearer to God than were the Jews. We stand in a far closer relation to the Divine Being than they. For whilst the complicated sacrifices and rites of the Law were necessary to entitle them to draw near to God, we approach His throne with faith and the offering of love, because through Christ we have received the promise of the inheritance, and know that He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, like the Jewish High-Priest, but into the heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. We know, that as baptized Christians, we are members of His Body, sharing in the life and strength derived from Him, and having a part in all the fruits of His work of mercy and love in our behalf. We know that He by His wondrous Incarnation, by His taking our flesh and dwelling among us, has united us to Himself in a most real and intimate manner, and has rendered us capable of receiving the highest and most heavenly gifts. We know, brethren, that though no longer with us in the flesh, though He no longer walks in bodily form upon the earth, yet He is still Emmanuel, God with us; that He still revisits us in all the majesty of His Divine, and in all the meekness of His human na-

Digitized by Google

ture; that He does, according to His own promise, communicate His very self to all who seek Him with the homage of their hearts, to all who draw near in faith to meet Him in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. "For the cup of blessing which we bless," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"

We see, then, the very close relation into which we are brought with our Lord, through the mystery of the Incarnation, and how much more real and close and influential is the Presence of the Lord amongst us, as Christians, than amongst the Jews. And if so, how great in proportion must be the reverence and honour due from us when brought within these hallowed buildings, wherein that Presence is manifested; wherein we are invited to hold special communion with the Lord in prayer and Sacraments; wherein we come to call upon His holy Name, to place ourselves in heart and mind in His immediate Presence, and to claim at His hand His promised answer to our prayers?

If, then, it was an awful thing for the Jews to draw near to the Temple, if the cleansings and purifications needful to fit them to join in the Temple worship testified to the solemn nature of the act, is there nothing to inspire us with awe? Is there no preparation needful for us, when we enter God's House, and are reminded of the intimate communion

Digitized by Google

subsisting between ourselves and Him; that we, the sinful creatures of earth, are the adopted children of God; that we, whom Satan and all earthly vanities held in bondage, have been called to a share in the glories of heaven; that in anticipation of the time when that glory shall be fully revealed, all are invited to join, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, in lauding and magnifying God's holy Name?

It needs, brethren, that we should try to become conscious, in some degree, of the greatness and majesty of God; that we should try to feel the reality of His Presence amongst us through the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, and the very awful and close relation with Him into which we are brought in all acts of worship, but especially in the highest act of worship, in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. It needs that we deepen our consciousness of these truths; and then, brethren, we should perceive in how many ways it would increase our love, and reverence, and holy zeal for the House of God, and everything connected with it. Then, when we enter the sacred building we should regard ourselves as in God's own presence-chamber, and should regulate our behaviour as the sense of His awful majesty would dictate. We should bear in mind the warning words addressed to Moses as he drew near to the burning bush, whereby the Divine Presence was signified: "Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We should remember that though

Digitized by Google

there is no outward form before our eyes, no evidence to our senses of the glory in which the Godhead dwells, that yet the sacred building which we tread is to us the token of the Divine Presence among us; that it is the place wherein God delights to meet us, and to draw us into ever closer communion with Himself. With this sense of the Divine Presence within us, every act and every word not done and said as in the sight of God, every gesture and behaviour betokening thoughtlessness or levity, will be to us as a grievous sin against the honour and majesty of the Divine Being; for we shall not be able to hide from ourselves that these outward acts, which in themselves may seem trifling and pardonable, are a sure index to the habitual state of our hearts; a clear proof that we are not really seeking to realize the infinite majesty of God's Presence.

But, brethren, it is not only in our outward behaviour that the reverence for God's Presence in His House of Prayer will shew itself, but also in the worship which we offer Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We, as Christians, do not shew our obedience by the sacrifice of bullocks and rams, but by the pure offering of praise and thanksgiving. We are called upon in His holy courts to join, not with lips only, but with heart and mind, in that spiritual worship which is well-pleasing to Him. We must ever, then, be on our guard, lest whilst we seem to be worshipping Him with our

Digitized by Google

lips, whilst we are repeating the words of praise, or putting up our prayers and supplications, our hearts be turned away from Him. Hard it is, as every one must know who has striven to serve God aright, to keep the mind wholly free from thoughts which tend to drag us down to earth, instead of lifting us up to heaven. Hard it is to shut out all external things, and to keep the mind firmly fixed on what is spiritual and unseen; nor are there means by which we can attain that power of abstraction, save by constant and persevering and habitual efforts. It can only be by checking ourselves, by constantly recalling our thoughts, by continually placing ourselves in God's Presence, and encouraging ourselves to associate God's Presence with the very building in which we worship, that we shall gradually acquire more perfect control over our thoughts, and be able to offer a more acceptable and spiritual worship.

And, my brethren, if it is hard for each one of us so to regulate our hearts and free them from all interruption of wandering thoughts, it is especially so for those who minister in God's House, and take part in conducting the worship in which the whole congregation joins. No doubt that there is much in the necessary attention to the more mechanical part of the service, which is absolutely necessary for its devout celebration, that does tend to distract the thoughts in no common degree. You, my brethren, whose duty and privilege it is to lead the people in the chanting of God's praises, and in putting up

Digitized by Google

their united petitions to the throne of grace, must know from experience how doubly needful it is that you should be on your guard against the treacherous wiles of the Evil One, who would turn the very care and attention which you devote to the due performance of your duty, and to the glory of God, to your own injury and ruin: who would lull your consciences, and deceive you with the false flattery that you are offering an acceptable service to God, when all the while, it may be, your hearts are far from Him, fixed only upon the outward form, and indulging in worldly thoughts of vanity, and in the desire of human praise. In this House of Prayer, dedicated to God's service, it is our privilege to find many helps towards worshipping God aright. The choral service, as it is the truest and most adequate interpretation of the spirit of our Prayer-book, so should it most adequately express the feelings and aspirations of every devout heart. But then, like every privilege and blessing, we must learn to value it, and come with hearts prepared for its reception, or it cannot avail for our good; rather it will do us positive injury. Faith, and obedience, and a hearty desire to become more and more worthy of them, are essential requisites for those who would understand or profit by the privileges of Christians. The sounds we hear may seem to us very beautiful, aye, they may seem to make us thrill with emotion, and yet unless we have learned to realize by prayer and meditation the feelings which these sounds interpret,

Digitized by Google

and have learned to comprehend the infinite importance of the subjects to which they relate, how shall we be the gainers? We may have enjoyed the pleasure of excited feelings for a time, but like all excitement it will only leave us more dead and callous than we were before.

Believe me, my brethren, we cannot with unsanctified hearts enjoy high privileges and remain the same. We cannot come habitually to God's House of Prayer with any degree of careless indifference, however slight, without injury to our spiritual being. We cannot come into God's House, merely or even chiefly for the gratification of our senses, regardless of His Presence, and retain a due fear and reverence elsewhere. If we accustom ourselves to disregard the associations connected with the place wherein our Lord has set His Name, wherein He speaks to us by His Word, wherein He vouchsafes to us His Presence, and comes to us in His blessed Sacrament, how can we hope to retain any consciousness of His nearness elsewhere, or to be actuated by any holy fear of Him, amid the temptations of an evil world?

Seek we then, one and all, by increased carefulness and a more scrupulous reverence, to impress ourselves with the real and spiritual nature of the duty implied in the worship of Almighty God. Let us come in trustful and loving obedience, striving to discern more and more of the blessedness of holding frequent and close communion with our heavenly

Digitized by Google

Father: remembering, that as we grow in faith and purity of heart, so shall we become more alive to all spiritual influences, more assured of a favourable answer to our prayers, more able to appreciate the privilege of blessing and praising God in His sanctuary.

Seek we then, as I have said, one and all, to cultivate diligently habits of reverence. Let everything on which God's name has been set be to us holy and sanctified. Let us in our outward behaviour accustom ourselves so to regard it: whether it be God's House, His revealed Word, His Sacraments, His holy days and seasons, His Ministers; whatever it be, if only connected and associated with divine and holy things, let it be to us an object of respect and reverence, for His sake whose Presence it in some sort betokens. And let us, above all, strive to cleanse our hearts from every impure thought and imagination, that when the Lord shall finally come to His temple to purify and to cleanse it, He may find us an acceptable people in His sight.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON III.

## Christian Worship.

HEBREWS xiii. 5.

*"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."*

ON a former occasion, my brethren, I spoke to you on the duty of reverence, as connected with a due regard for those hallowed buildings which have been dedicated to the service of Almighty God. I reminded you of the acts of severity by which our Lord evinced His holy indignation at the heartless disregard of this duty by the buyers and sellers in the Temple; and observed that the warning was intended to be of lasting application, inasmuch as each Christian Church stands not only in the same relation to us, as the Temple of old did to the Jews, viz. as a visible token of the Divine Presence, but also in a special relation, as the appointed place wherein that Presence is vouchsafed to us in acts of Christian worship, in a mode more intimate and more real than that which was revealed to them.

Digitized by Google

I desire now to direct your attention to the nature of that worship which it is our privilege as Christians to offer, and which we believe to be blessed in so peculiar a manner by the Divine Presence; and to lead you to reflect for a few moments on the principles on which it is based, that so we may be brought to a truer estimate of its importance, and of the responsibilities of all engaged in it.

Of the nature and necessity of worship in general I need not speak. We know that in all ages, and countries, and conditions of mankind, a religious instinct has prompted man to reach forth in the spirit beyond himself; and that his inward feelings have found expression for themselves in acts of worship of various kinds. The most degraded rites of heathen superstition are a testimony to this deep-seated consciousness of dependence upon a higher power, and of the need of propitiating its favour; and prove that though man may lose the knowledge of the one true God, yet his imagination will form for itself some object of worship.

But we have now to confine our attention to one aspect only of this great subject, and to consider the nature of that Public Worship in which we engage as baptized Christians, and the grounds on which it rests.

Now, my brethren, if we reflect on the nature and intent of united public worship, what are the ideas opened out to us? To some persons, all acts of worship, whether private or public, will seem to be

Digitized by Google

individual in their nature, and to serve only for the purpose of personal edification. They regard worship simply as a means by which some inward spiritual benefit may be conferred upon themselves, and value the invitation to join in the Church's services only in proportion as they seem likely to be productive of that advantage to themselves. Now it cannot, of course, be denied that one grand object of all our attendance at the sanctuary of God, should be that we may receive spiritual refreshment, that we may drink deep of the supplies of divine grace mercifully accorded to us; that we may ascend on the wings of faith and prayer, to Him who sitteth on the throne, and hold communion with the blessed; and that penitence, faith, hope, and love, may be deepened and strengthened within us. These, brethren, are truths which cannot be gainsaid; and yet they are very far from exhausting the full meaning and intent of Christian worship. The view which they represent, true as far as it goes, is yet imperfect: and for this reason, because it is based upon an imperfect view of our position as Christians. It regards our acts of worship solely in relation to ourselves as individuals, and loses sight entirely of that higher and truer view which regards it in relation to our membership with Christ. For surely the truth is, that we do not come to join in acts of worship as *individuals*, but as members of the Body of Christ. It is our very incorporation into His mystical Body, by Holy Baptism, that bestows

Digitized by Google

upon us the privilege of access to God, and opens to us the door of grace. A Christian congregation is not an accidental gathering together of any number of men whatever, but a meeting of members of Christ in their collective capacity. We come to claim a share in the merits of Christ our head and representative, to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in the strength of His all-sufficient sacrifice, and of His continual and all-prevailing intercession. For He who died for us has not completed His work of love in our behalf; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; but He ever liveth to make intercession for those who have been made His brethren: He still lives to plead, He still presents the merits of that sacrifice He offered once for all; He is still the great High-Priest, doing for us in reality in heaven, what the Church on earth does only in figure and representation.

Through Him then, and through Him alone, have we access to God: He is the one Mediator between God and man; and all our acts of worship can only have any meaning or efficacy in so far as they rest upon this great truth of our Lord's mediation. And, brethren, if this be true, it is clear that worship cannot be regarded correctly in its relation to us as isolated individuals. For we cannot as individuals claim our Lord as our Mediator, for His mediatorial work is not being wrought out for each man in his separate capacity, but for the whole

Digitized by Google

Church, of which all baptized men are members; and it is only by claiming our position as members of that body, that we can obtain the benefits of His heavenly work of mercy in our behalf. And from this it follows that our worship as Christians must be a "common" worship, our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving must be offered up by us in our collective capacity as members of Christ. Thus, each separate congregation will represent and intercede for the whole Church: thus, the Holy Church throughout the world will acknowledge Him. Separated though it be by distance, of many nations, and peoples, and tongues, it will still be one,—one in faith, one in hope, one in the same Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus. Nor will this cord of sympathy bind us only to the living, but recognising the fact that without us the blessed departed are not perfected, and realizing the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, we shall pray God shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom, that we with them may enter into rest.

And this deeper view of the nature of Christian worship, as based upon our Lord's mediation, may enable us to realize more fully the meaning of those words of Scripture, in which, as Christians, we are said to have been made "kings and priests unto God and our Father;" and to have been built up "into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God." For it is in the performance of acts of religious worship that we offer this

Digitized by Google

our sacrifice, and exercise the functions of that priesthood with which our baptism has invested us. When we come into the congregation, and shew forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, then do we exercise our office; and whilst we in no wise interfere with the duties and responsibilities of those who in a special manner have been set apart for the priesthood, we unite together in the enjoyment of our highest privilege, in offering up the sacrifice of prayer and praise to God. And thus it follows from what has been said, that Christian worship is not only for the purpose of edification, not only to be the means of imparting some benefit to us, but to afford us the opportunity of *doing* something ourselves. It is as it were the voice and action of Christians testifying to their living union with their Lord; it is the outward expression and result of the inward spiritual life. Just as the ordinary natural life shews itself in outward action, so the spiritual life of the Christian Family gives tokens of its reality in acts of common worship. And here we are led to observe the distinction between acts of private and public worship. The importance of private devotion, of communing with God in our own chamber, whether in prayer or in the study of His word, can never be too strongly insisted upon both as a duty and a privilege, so long as we do not allow it to usurp the place of that higher privilege of united worship whereby we bear witness to our common brotherhood. For we must remember that



Digitized by Google

the prayers which we offer up in our chamber must always bear reference to, and derive their efficacy from, that union between ourselves and our Lord, which common united worship is the means of continuing; and will be ever grounded on that privilege of approach which, in common with all our brethren, we claim when we come into the Lord's House. Every prayer we offer we conclude by pleading our Saviour's Name and merits as the only channel through which we can hope it will reach the throne of grace; and that very form of pleading Christ's merits as *our* Lord, testifies to the truth that, all acts of worship being based on His mediation, we must claim our position as members of the great Christian family, and seek in acts of common united worship to bind ourselves more closely to Him. The duty and privilege, then, of private devotion will ever be subordinate to the higher duty of worshipping God in the congregation, seeing that we have access to God only in virtue of that intercession which is offered for the elect at large, and of that sacrifice in which the whole Christian body has a common interest.

Seeing, then, that the united worship of Christians is so great and lovely in its nature, and so comprehensive in its meaning; seeing that it brings us into communion with the whole Church, both with the living and the dead; that it is the expression in act of our highest privilege as Christians; and above all, that it brings us into the closest relation with our

Digitized by Google

Lord, by enabling us to claim and plead His mediation, how great must be the responsibility of all who are engaged in it. How careful should we be, whose special office it is to present the offering of praise and thanksgiving to God, as well as all others, whether choirmen or choristers, who are appointed to lead the people in their devotions,—how careful, I say, should we be lest any imperfection of ours, any want of realising the solemn nature of our work, any, the slightest, indifference on our parts, should not only mar the acceptableness of our offering, as respects ourselves, but, by tending to weaken the spirit of earnestness in those to whom we minister, deprive them also of its efficacy. How carefully should we ever bear in mind that, if it is a great privilege and a precious blessing to be allowed to minister in holy things, it is also not without its peculiar dangers and temptations; that the very frequency with which we are called upon to take part in the most solemn acts, and our necessary familiarity with words of most sacred meaning, must tend to deaden our sensibility, and render us cold and formal, unless, by corresponding efforts on our parts, we seek to deepen and quicken our belief in the great realities with which we are concerned.

But, my brethren, if it is well for such of us as are Christ's ordained ministers to reflect upon these points, seeing that we are called into a very special and close relationship with holy things; it should be borne in mind that there are others also who

Digitized by Google

have their duties and their parts to perform in the congregation; that the lay members have their office as well as the clergy, seeing that as lively stones they are built up "into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." As our worship is not to be the separate act of any single individual, but the combined action of the whole Body, of which we claim to be members, so will the service, which is to be its adequate expression, aim at allotting to each individual an active part. For if we are to worship as a united body, it must needs be that the members of that body should each contribute towards the outward expression of its worship; and thus we are brought to consider how far we seek in practice to carry out what seems so evidently true in theory.

Now it cannot be denied that in the fact of our being supplied with an unvarying form of prayer, taken in connection with the construction of our Service-book and the directions which accompany it, makes it perfectly clear that the Church has desired to bring out very strongly the principle of common worship, and by giving great prominence to the people's part, to unite all together in heart and voice in the offices of prayer and praise. It is evident she desires that priest and people should both be engaged in the work of the sanctuary, and that either part should be essential to the unity of the whole; and that if one or other of them is omitted, or suffered to fall into the hands of a few,

Digitized by Google

the meaning of the service cannot but be inadequately interpreted, and the intentions of the Church frustrated. And yet, though the principle of common worship is clear and undeniable, and the means for carrying it into practice evident and sufficient, how few are there amongst us who seem to be alive to its importance, or care by the exercise of their voices to give effect to the characteristic beauty of our service. And how much do we lose by this! how great a help do we cast aside! No wonder that men complain of wandering thoughts when they try to pray with sealed lips; no wonder that deadness and coldness steal over the soul: for the sense of union is at an end; there is no token of sympathy, no help from others by hearing others pray, no mark of heart joining to heart to stir them up, and kindle the spirit of prayer afresh, when it is beginning to flag and to tire. For surely, brethren, there is something very solemn and impressive in the concordant sound of many voices carrying up the united praises and thanksgivings of Christian men to the throne of Majesty on high. Such audible worship spurs our sluggish hearts, kindles the fire of devotion within us, and inspires us with a more lively sense of God's Presence, and of the holy work for which we have sought His holy house. But our loss is greater still; for we are foregoing our peculiar privilege, we are marring the offering which we are invited to make to God. For we come into God's Church as united members of a body, to

Digitized by Google

perform a distinct act. We come that we may with heart and voice glorify God; that we may express openly and audibly the thoughts of our hearts; that our tongues may pour forth those thoughts in words of thanksgiving and confession of sin. We come to worship God with our whole being, with our bodies as well as our souls; nor can it be otherwise than displeasing to Him that we should offer to Him only a part of what is wholly His, that we should offer Him the fruit of our hearts, but refuse Him the fruit of our lips. "By Him," says St. Paul, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."

Nor, my brethren, would a willing obedience in this matter, however trifling it may seem, be without its reward. God has ordained that blessings and duties should be closely connected together: and so in this case, what is now to many perhaps an irksome duty or a weariness, would become a pleasure; when they came into the sanctuary, they would feel that they had a distinct work to do, namely, to witness, not only by their presence but by their voices, to the blessedness of their position as the redeemed sons of God. And when once, brethren, we are personally engaged in any act which enlists our sympathies and is congenial to us, there is an end of all weariness and all distraction. Whilst we stand by merely to meditate on what goes on, a mere trifle may turn aside our attention, and then

Digitized by Google

the repeated efforts to fix it anew will be a source of fatigue; but let us ourselves be taking our part in the work, and then the very exertion of our praises is a direct stimulus to concentrate our attention on what we have to do. Would, then, that very many of the members of this congregation could be brought to a deeper sense of the privilege of common worship, and of the part which each should take in it! Would that they would be persuaded to give to God their voices, and resolve to praise Him with the best member that they have! Would that they could be brought to give audible testimony to their conviction that the Church of God should not be the only building in which we can find no voice to express the thoughts of our hearts! Would that they could be brought to lift up heart and voice, and make the holy place resound with the holiest of earthly sounds! "O Lord, open Thou our lips; and our mouth shall shew Thy praise."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON IV.

## Common Worship.

HEBREWS xiii. 15.

*"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name."*

AMONG the many false impressions to which we are liable, there is none which we ought more stedfastly to resist, than that which our daily contact with the world is apt to suggest to us, viz., that we are subjected only to the influences of outward objects and circumstances. That there is a direct tendency in the course of most men's lives to suggest this impression, and that it actually is produced, to some degree at least, in so many of us, are points which I think our own experience will enable us to affirm. I think no man could deny that, living in a world where his thoughts, his faculties, his energies, are to a great extent necessarily exercised upon outward objects and circumstances, the effects of which are apparent to his senses, he is tempted to believe that nothing that is not tangible can be real, and to lose sight of any other means

Digitized by Google

by which his character or future may be influenced and modified, save what he actually sees before him. We are, in fact, so much occupied with what concerns the material part of our being. There are very many who walk entirely by sight, who fail in any degree to realize their position as spiritual beings in the sight of God, who have never risen to any higher conception of the dignity and end of their being, than that which represents it as serving only for selfish gratification.

But I speak not now of that entire forgetfulness of our spiritual relationship to God, which is confined only to those who are altogether ignorant of religious truth, and generally careless in their practice; rather I speak of that which, in a different degree and under a different form, will be found amongst those who are acquainted with, and profess to believe, all the chief doctrines of religion. It will be found that there are many who not only know as matters of fact, but are practically influenced by, all that Christ has done for them, who yet are very far from realizing the full blessedness of that Communion that has been established between earth and heaven, with all the precious influences of strength and healing that flow from it. They are deeply thankful for the blessings of redemption, for their deliverance from the penalty of sin, and are full of trustful confidence in the merits of that sacrifice whereby they have been reconciled to God; they are anxious to cast aside all idea of any de-

Digitized by Google

servings of their own; of any righteousness, save the righteousness of Christ; they refer all their hope and consolation to what has been wrought for them through the infinite wisdom and love of God in Christ; but they go no further; at this point they stop. They reflect only on their present position in respect to what has been done, without proceeding further to realize all that is yet being done for them: they are apt to regard their present state as one indeed of great blessedness, but they fail to discern its fulness, because they lose sight of the special acts by which our Lord, now sitting at the right hand of the Father, works in their behalf. They accustom themselves to think of His great work, whereby He was to save a ruined world and restore the interrupted intercourse between man and his Maker, and finally gather to Himself His faithful members, a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, as already completed. They do not understand that though the Son of God has accomplished such great and priceless deeds of mercy for us, He is still working in our behalf; that as for our sakes He has become the Head and representative of the whole human race, has purified and sanctified our human nature, and made it obedient to the perfect law of holiness, and victorious over the power of death; so, now that He has ascended up on high, He has not renounced the mission with which He charged Himself, but now in heaven stands before His Father as the Perfect

Digitized by Google

Man, exhibiting our nature in all its original purity, and as the one High-Priest continually pleading His own all-sufficient offering for sin. They do not realize that they are the objects in whose behalf Christ our Lord is now at this present time acting in His character as man's representative. They do, indeed, admit His spiritual influence over their hearts, but they limit that rather to the result of their own personal and individual communings with Him in thought and feeling, than to any special work in which He is now engaged, and of which the benefits must be sought by special means. In a word, my brethren, they lose sight of that mediatorial work which Christ as our ascended High-Priest is for ever carrying on; that work by which grace and strength are transmitted to His Church; that work through which virtue and efficacy are imparted to every ordinance of religion; that work through which alone any offering of ours can be made acceptable to our Father which is in heaven. All that is tangible and material—the business, the pleasures, the affairs of life—are so continually before us, exciting, amusing, or troubling us, and at all times appearing to form so large and necessary part of a man's existence, that our minds find it difficult to conceive of that mysterious spiritual intercourse which is ever maintained between the Church on earth and the Church's Head, even our Lord in heaven. And yet, my brethren, so it is: "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." For

Digitized by Google

Christ, when He ascended up from the Mount of Olives in His Man's nature, did not, like the Jewish High-Priest, "enter into the holy places made with hands, which are the *figures* of the true; but into *heaven* itself, *now* to appear in the presence of God for us." "Wherefore," says St. Paul in another place, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

This then, my brethren, is the great reality which we are so apt to lose sight of, which the poor, shifting, transitory unrealities of this world would fain shut out from our view. This is the great reality, the full comprehension of which can alone interpret to us the full meaning of that economy of grace, of which we as members of Christ, knit into one holy brotherhood under Him as our Head, are partakers. But not only does the misapprehension of this great truth hinder us from realizing the efficacy and value of many of our privileges, but it does more,—it deprives us of a very effectual, practical stimulus to holiness. Great and manifold as are the motives for holiness to be derived from the deeds of mercy wrought by our blessed Lord in time gone by, yet how would those motives be strengthened and increased if the eye of faith, piercing the veil that intercepts our view of the spiritual world, should reveal to us that same Lord, still clothed in the body which He assumed in His humiliation, standing before the throne of His Father; still working in our

Digitized by Google

behalf, still gradually bringing to its final completion the work which He only commenced on earth, and which shall never end as long as the Church is militant here below.

Then, brethren, should we become conscious of the numberless streams of grace which are overflowing the churches of Christ, in answer to that all-powerful intercession which He, as man's representative, ever makes on behalf of His brethren. Then should we behold Him continually pleading His own great sacrifice; presenting Himself continually to His Father as a lamb as it had been slain, in behalf of each one of us, and as the propitiation for every sin which we commit. Then should we behold all the offerings of the Church, the sacrifice of praise and prayer and thanksgiving, ascending to heaven through the path which has been opened for them by Christ the Intercessor, and rendered acceptable to the Father for His Son's sake through whom they are presented. Could we be fully persuaded of these truths, which are written for us in Scripture, if only we could search them out; could we ever bear in mind that such a great work for our sakes, as members of Christ's Body, is continually going on; that He who desired to save us, when He had humbled Himself to our nature, and had suffered and died for us, was not content, even when He had crushed our last enemy by His resurrection, to rest from His labour, but even now at this very moment is engaged as Mediator and Intercessor in bringing us onward on our

Digitized by Google

course towards heaven; we could not fail in love and gratitude to co-operate with Him, and to become worthy recipients of His grace, that so we might work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, shewing that it is He that is working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Allowing, then, my brethren, as we must, the importance of realizing more fully and continually the great and ever-abiding truth of our Lord's mediation, it will be well for us to examine the economy under which, as Christians, we live, and consider whether one or more of the means by which Christ binds us to Himself, and which derive their efficacy from the reality of our Lord's mediation, may not usefully be dwelt upon in connexion with that great truth, and so become the means of continually reminding us of it. Now of all the ordinances of which it is our privilege as members of Christ's Church to partake, there is none which is more intimately connected with the truth of which we have been speaking than that of Common Worship. If we consider the nature and importance of that united act in which, as Christians, we all consider ourselves bound to join, we shall find that its efficacy, as an appointed means of grace, depends entirely on the abiding reality of our blessed Lord's Mediation, and that we only enter into its full meaning, and estimate its value aright, when we view it in connexion with that truth. Now, if we reflect on the nature and intent of common worship in public, what are the ideas opened out to

Digitized by Google

us? It may be thought by some that the end and aim of public worship is only personal edification; that we come to church only for the purpose of carrying away for ourselves individually some particular blessing, and enjoying the pleasure of excited feelings and sympathies. Now it may be admitted at once that all this is, in part, the object of public common worship. This view, which regards it solely in relation to ourselves as individuals, is perfectly correct as far as it goes. Doubtless we do come to God's House that we may drink deep of the fountains of Divine grace which are there opened out for us; that our spirits may ascend on the wings of prayer to hold communion with our Father which is in heaven; and that we may depart with hearts inflamed with deeper love, and our spirits cheered by a brighter and more enduring hope. This view then is true, I say, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough; we must not stop at this point, or else we fail to form any adequate conception of the ordinance in question. We shall be accepting an imperfect and very low view of what is full of the deepest meaning, and is related to us not as individuals merely, but as united members of a holy family. For the truth is, we do not come to church as *individuals*, but as members of Christ, as members of that great family into which we are admitted at our baptism, and of which Christ is the Head. True it is that, as Christians, we may all have access unto God, and may come with boldness to the throne of

Digitized by Google

grace; but it is through Christ alone as the Mediator that we have this access; it is because we can claim relationship to Him through our common nature that we can dare to present ourselves before the throne of grace. So, again, it is true that we have been made kings and priests unto God and our Father; that we have been "built up into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God;" but then it is from Christ alone, the one great High-Priest, that we derive authority and power to offer up our spiritual sacrifices; through Him alone can they be made acceptable unto God, in virtue of that perfect sacrifice which He ever pleads in our behalf.

Thus, my brethren, it is evident that all our acts of worship can only have any meaning, or efficacy, in so far as they are made directly to refer to the great work which our Lord as the one Mediator is carrying on in heaven. And as we cannot as individuals claim our Lord as our mediator; as His mediatorial work is being wrought, not for each man in his capacity as an individual, but for the whole Church united to Him in one body; so we cannot hope to claim the benefits of that heavenly work of mercy, we cannot plead His intercession in our behalf, unless we claim our position as members of that body for which alone He works.

Therefore it is, my brethren, that our worship as Christians must be a common worship; our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving must be offered up by

Digitized by Google

us in our collective capacity as members of Christ. We must come into the congregation, and so claim our place in the holy Church of Christ, which throughout all the world doth acknowledge Him, if we would desire that our prayers should be accepted for His sake in whose Name we offer them. And this deeper view of the connexion of common worship with the mediation of our Lord, whilst it enhances the importance in our eyes of joining in these acts of common worship, will shew us the error into which men fall when they consider that acts of private devotion are a sufficient substitute for public worship. Though the importance of private and family devotion, of communing with God in our own chamber, whether in prayer or in the study of His Word, can never be too strongly enjoined upon us as a duty and a privilege; yet, brethren, it will cease to be either if it is suffered to interfere with, or take the place of, that higher duty of united worship whereby we bear witness to our common brotherhood. Every prayer which we offer up we conclude by pleading our Saviour's name and merits as the only channel through which we can hope that it will reach the throne of grace. Nor let us forget that that form with which all our prayers, whether private or public, conclude, pleads the merits of our Saviour not in reference to ourselves individually, but as members of a body: it is not through Jesus Christ *my* Lord and Saviour, but *our* Lord and Saviour. If we desire to avail ourselves of our Lord's



Digitized by Google

mediation, it must be as members of that great family into which we have been admitted at baptism. We must ever assert our membership, by joining with our brethren in that united worship which is the means by which we obtain the all-prevailing intercession of our Great High-Priest. And so the prayers which we offer up in our chamber will always bear reference to, and derive their efficacy from, that union between ourselves and our Lord, which common united worship is the means of continuing; will be ever grounded on that privilege of approach which, in common with all our brethren, we claim when we come into the Lord's House. Even as Daniel, in captivity, prayed with his windows open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, because he knew that God had promised to be present in an extraordinary manner in His Temple or Sanctuary, so shall we (when we offer our prayers to God in our own chamber) when hindered by any lawful reason from frequenting the House of God, believe that we have access to God in virtue of that intercession which is offered for the elect at large, and of that sacrifice in which the whole Christian body has a common interest.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON V.

## The Choral Principle of Divine Worship the Characteristic of both Covenants.

PSALM lxviii. 32, 33.

"*Sing unto God, O ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord; who sitteth in the heavens over all from the beginning: lo He doth send out His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice.*"

PSALM cl. 6.

"*Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.*"

TO praise God, my brethren, to give Him glory, to extol and magnify His glorious Name, is the first impulse of a heart that has learned to realize the Personality of the Godhead, and to recognise the power, wisdom, and love that direct and control the whole universe. To understand the relation in which man stands to God as His creature, as the offspring of His creating love, as the being which He has been pleased to endow with faculties and powers beyond that of any other created thing; whom He has made capable of the highest enjoyment in this world, and of an immortality of happiness in the world to come; and then to realize his

Digitized by Google

entire dependence upon that Almighty Being as the sole Sustainer and Preserver of those wondrous powers; I say, to be consciously impressed with these truths, is to be filled with humble thankfulness, and an eager impulse to acknowledge the divine goodness by the grateful homage of our whole being. The sense of great favours and benefits conferred ever tends to awaken a spirit of gratitude, and to excite feelings of love and admiration towards our benefactor, and those feelings find their natural expression through our lips in the exulting strain of praise. The soul, elated with joy and gladness, and reaching forth in thankful love towards its Almighty benefactor, seeks expression for its feelings; and finding the ordinary modes of speech inadequate for its purpose, has recourse to that power of melody and song, whereby it has pleased the Creator that we should be able to represent most vividly the strongest and most varied emotions of the heart. That power whereby the harmony of sounds is adapted to convey the impressions of the mind is surely, brethren, one of the most wonderful, as it is one of the most precious of God's gift to His creatures. It is most wonderful, because of the endless variety of its application: whether in sorrow and heaviness, or in joy and gladness, whether we desire to be composed and yearn for consolation, or to have our affections moved and excited; it supplies an endless combination of sounds suitable to each occasion. It is a most precious gift, because it affords a medium

Digitized by Google

through which the noblest and purest feelings of the human heart may find expression, without which they would remain pent up within us; and again, because of its power and influence over the heart, in exciting and awakening these very feelings themselves. No wonder then, my brethren, that the utterance of God's praises with the voice of melody, has ever formed a chief part of the worship of God's people in all ages. The first song on record is one of triumphant gratitude to God, offered up as a sort of religious service after the children of Israel had safely passed the Red Sea. Moses and Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, sung a strain of responsive melody to each other. Moses said, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." And Miriam answered: "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

Again, in the Book of Judges we read, "Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord, for the avenging of Israel." But, my brethren, it is in the book of Psalms that we find the full development of this spirit of praise. In that book we find the sublimest poems, specially intended, as is evident both from their construction, and the titles prefixed to them, to be joined with musical accompaniment. The Psalm of David provoked the harp of David. The solemn chant was not wanting to give suitable expression to the varied songs, whether of triumph,

Digitized by Google

gratitude, exultation, and hope; or to those which gave utterance to the more depressing passions of the mind, as sorrow and grief. "To the chief musician," is one of the commonest titles to the Psalms, evidently shewing that they were to be set to music for Divine Service. Sometimes it has been supposed that the musical instruments with which they were to be accompanied were mentioned, as in the heading to the twenty-second Psalm, "To the chief musician upon Aijeleth Shahar." Then, independently of the construction of the Psalms, which clearly indicates the intention that they should be joined with musical accompaniment, we know as a fact that David had deemed a choir of singers and musicians necessary for the fitting celebration of Divine Worship. We read, in the sixteenth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles: "He appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals. Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God." Here, then, was a choir in its full and complete sense, and here was the choral service performed by the priests and Levites, "as every day's work required;" and this, brethren, you will remember was before the Temple

Digitized by Google

was built. It was before the ark that David and his band of trained and practised choristers poured forth their praises, saying: "Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His Name, make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works."

And then, brethren, when we come to Solomon's time and the building of the Temple, what careful and elaborate arrangements we find made to provide suitable services for the sanctuary. We find the singers and musicians arranged in their courses as David had appointed them, with a person specially set to preside over each: Asaph over the singers, Jonathan over those who played on the harp, Heman over the trumpeters; and in the account of the Dedication of the Temple, we see how necessary such arrangements were deemed for the due celebration of the Divine Service on that most solemn occasion. Thus it is said: "And the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests, sounding with trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever; and then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory

Digitized by Google

of the Lord had filled the house of God." And this choral service, instituted by David, and carried out more fully by Solomon, ever after continued to be the mode of conducting the worship of Almighty God. And it is a remarkable fact that whenever the religion of the people declined, the musical service was less cared for, and the praises of God died away; so that in times of revival and of increased earnestness under the latter kings, we find much attention devoted to the re-arrangement and restoration of the music of the sanctuary. Thus Josiah made it his care to place "the singers the sons of Asaph in their place according to the commandment of David." And so, after the children of Israel had returned from their captivity in Babylon, where they had wept when they remembered Zion, and hung their harps upon the willows in the midst thereof, because they could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land; when they returned once more to lay the foundations of the Temple, then we read that Ezra "set the priests in their apparel, with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David, king of Israel."

Such, then, was the method of conducting the religious service amongst the Jews. It was felt under the elder covenant, and such feelings were inspired by God Himself, that the praises of the Lord of heaven and earth were offered up most perfectly, and in a manner best calculated to express their

Digitized by Google

meaning, when they were chanted forth in the jubilant strains of choral harmony. The power of song and of music was a gift from on high, and how could it be better employed than in being consecrated to His service, whose gift it was, and in promoting by a wondrous sympathy of sound those very feelings of love and gratitude it was ever so well calculated to express.

And, my brethren, can it for a moment be maintained that the choral principle of Divine Worship was to be restricted to the Jews? Have we ceased then, as Christians, to have a right to praise and magnify the Lord our God? Have we fewer motives for addressing God in strains of joyful thankfulness? What, brethren, have the blessings of redemption, and the whole mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, spread out to us no fresh subjects for the most exulting tones of praise? If the Jew who knew God only as His Creator, who had but a dim insight into the mysteries of the spiritual world, and whose ideas of the Divine goodness hardly reached beyond this world,—if he was taught that the service of the sanctuary was not complete without the uplifted voices of men to chant forth the praises of His God,—if he was taught that this was the most perfect offering he could make to God in the sanctuary—shall the Christian exclude such expressions of joy from his service? Shall he to whom the great mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity was revealed, who has learned not only in the power

Digitized by Google

of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity, but also to love and adore the three Persons of the Godhead, and to realize the filial relation in which he stands to the Father through the Eternal Son by the aid of the ever-blessed Spirit,—shall he be content to make a less perfect offering of praise and thanksgiving, or to adopt a service less jubilant in its tone than was that of the Jew? If the sons of Asaph and the Levites sang in the Temple, shall the sons of God in Christ and the ministers of the Holy Spirit be silent in the Church? No, brethren, such a thought is an insult to the religion we profess. It is to deny the power of the Holy Ghost shed abroad in the Church at Pentecost, whereby the hearts of men are made conscious of new subjects of praise, and more susceptible of the deepest emotions of love and joy. And so, as it were, to deny such ideas at the very outset, the very first announcement of the Gospel comes to us amid strains of harmony, for there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." We shall not forget that at the close of our blessed Lord's ministry, on that eventful evening before His death, the solemn chant was heard, as the Divine Master and His disciples sang the Paschal Hymn before He went out to the Mount of Olives. And so, my brethren, I might refer you to the hymn of the Blessed Virgin, of Zacharias, and of the aged Simeon; I might instance the example of Paul and Silas in

Digitized by Google

their prison-house at Philippi; I might quote passages from the Epistles in which psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are commended to our use; but enough, I think, has been said to shew that holy songs characterise the worship of God in both His covenants—that throughout there is a choral principle—human voices with the sounds of musical instruments conjoined in prayer and praise.

But, brethren, if the Scriptures both of the old and new covenant bear such ample testimony to the choral principle of divine worship, we should expect to find it developed in the services of the early Christians. And such, brethren, is the case. There is no doubt that the Psalms of David formed a very chief part of the earliest services. The Psalms, now regarded in their spiritual and Gospel sense, were made the fitting medium of offering up praise and thanksgiving to God, as well as of expressing the deepest feelings of humble penitence. And even the antiphonal mode of chanting those divine songs which prevails amongst ourselves, in which one side repeats one verse, and the other side, answering, repeats the next, may be traced as far back as the latter part of the first century, when St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, the disciple of St. Peter and contemporary of St. John, introduced this system of chanting. And so the solemn chant may be traced from Antioch to Cæsarea in the year 370, when we find St. Basil alluding to it. Later still, St. Chrysostom, at Constantinople, speaks of it. From the

Digitized by Google

East it spread to the West, for St. Augustine bears touching testimony to the effect which the chanting introduced by St. Ambrose at Milan produced upon himself. "When I remember," he writes, "the tears I shed at the Psalmody of the Church in the beginning of my recovered faith, and how at this time I am moved, not with the singing, but with the things sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and modulation suitable, I acknowledge the great use of this institution." From St. Ambrose we trace the chant onwards to St. Gregory the Great, at the close of the sixth century, when it received important additions and improvements from that master of ecclesiastical song. That solemn chant, as arranged by him, still remains, though now 1200 years old; and its simple grandeur, and majesty, and entire suitableness to the service of the sanctuary, are acknowledged even by those who prefer a more modern and ornate style of music. And thus, from the time of St. Gregory and the restoration of the Christian faith in this country by the zeal of its first missioner, St. Augustine, the ecclesiastical chant has been preserved and handed down to us of this very time; and the choral service has become a constituent part of the regular worship of the English Church. We are bound also to remember that at the Reformation —when it was a chief object not only to correct much error of doctrine, but to simplify and render intelligible the whole service of the Sanctuary — the choral principle was maintained throughout, and

Digitized by Google

the ecclesiastical chant faithfully preserved as the most perfect mode for conducting and giving expression to the worship of Almighty God; and it is remarkable that it is at that very era in the history of the English Church, during the reigns of Henry VIII., of Edward VI., and of Elizabeth, when the re-action from the peculiar doctrine and discipline of the Church of Rome was at its height, that the names of the greatest masters of the English school of music occur. When errors and corruptions were being cast out, when a ritual too complicated and overlaid with ceremonial was being simplified, and the tendency was to undo and to destroy, the choral service of the Church was deliberately retained, and in the compositions of Tye and Tallis, Gibbons, Creighton and Purcell, we behold the ancient spirit of the Church still maintaining its sway. And that which was retained and established at the Reformation has been preserved to us throughout all subsequent dangers, and in spite of great efforts to cast it out. The same spirit which had led men to destroy all that was beautiful in the sanctuary, to desecrate the altar, to destroy and mutilate the very fabric of our churches, led them to cry loudly for the destruction of the choral service, but by the mercy of God their designs were frustrated.

Thus, while we thank God that these efforts have not prevailed, we cannot do better than remember the beautiful defence of Hooker against those who would fain have deprived us of the music of the

Digitized by Google

sanctuary: "Touching musical harmony, whether by instrument or by voice, it being but of high and low in sounds, a due proportionable disposition, such, notwithstanding, is the force thereof, and so pleasing an effect it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some have been thereby induced to think that the soul itself by nature is or hath in it harmony. A thing which delighteth all ages and beseemeth all states; a thing as seasonable in grief as in joy; as decent, being added unto actions of greatest weight and solemnity, as being used when men most sequester themselves from action. The reason whereof is an admirable facility which music hath to express and represent to the mind more inwardly than any other sensible mean, the very standing, rising and falling, the very steps and inflections every way, the turns and varieties, of all passions whereunto the mind is subject; yea, so to imitate them, that whether it resemble unto us the same state wherein our minds already are, or a clear contrary, we are not more contentedly by the one confirmed, than changed and led away by the other. The prophet David, therefore," he goes on, "having singular knowledge, not in poetry alone but in music also, judged them both to be things most necessary for the House of God, left behind him to that purpose a number of divinely-indited poems, and was further the author of adding unto poetry melody in public prayer, melody both vocal and instrumental, for the raising up of men's

Digitized by Google

hearts, and the sweetening of their affections towards God. In which considerations the Church of Christ doth likewise at this present day retain it as an ornament to God's service, and an help to our own devotion. They must have hearts very dry and tough, from whom the melody of Psalms doth not sometime draw that wherein a mind religiously affected delighteth." So he adds, "the custom we now use was not instituted so much for their cause who are spiritual, (viz. those who are advanced in spiritual life and do not require such helps,) as to the end that into grosser and heavier minds, whom bare words do not easily move, the sweetness of melody might make some entrance for good things." And then he quotes a beautiful passage from St. Basil: "For," saith he, "whereas the Holy Spirit saw that mankind is unto virtue hardly drawn, and that righteousness is less accounted of by reason of the proneness of our affections to that which delighteth; it pleased the wisdom of the same Spirit to borrow from melody that pleasure, which mingled with heavenly mysteries, causeth the smoothness and softness of that which toucheth the ear, to convey as it were by stealth the treasure of good things into man's mind. To this purpose were those harmonious tunes of Psalms devised for us, that they that are either in years but young, or touching perfection of virtue as yet not grown to ripeness, might, when they think they sing, learn the wise conceit of that heavenly teacher, which

Digitized by Google

hath by his skill found out a way, that doing those things wherein we delight, we may also learn that whereby we profit."

Believing, then, my brethren, that the teaching of the Church in all ages, both under the old and new Covenant, is in favour of the choral principle of Divine Service; believing that it has been deliberately retained and sanctioned in our English branch of the Church; and above all, believing that the Church's service is in itself the most perfect offering of worship we can make to God in the sanctuary, I have endeavoured, ever since I have ministered amongst you, to lead you to understand and appreciate this,—the highest and most solemn mode of worship. I have felt that, privileged as we are to worship in this glorious building, we have facilities afforded us for carrying out that more ornate service which are denied to others; and that in foregoing the aid of the Church's chant and song in this church especially, we should be laying aside one most powerful instrument for touching the heart, and awakening the soul to a sense of the love and goodness of God.

Surely we must never neglect any means by which men's hearts may be lifted up from this earth and its vanities, to think of heavenly things. We must not in a careless and niggardly spirit pare down the service of the sanctuary to what is absolutely necessary, but rather in the free and loving spirit of Jesus strive to make that service as worthy as pos-

Digitized by Google

sible of the great God to whom it is offered, and as conducive as may be to the advancement of His glory, in the increase of religion both in ourselves and those around us.

But while we love and cherish this our choral service, whereby we are conscious that the religious emotions of the heart are most adequately expressed, let us ever be on our guard against the fatal deception of mistaking the excitement of religious emotion for that vital religion of the heart, which shews itself in a calm and steady self-discipline of daily life. Remember, I would beseech you, that if these services do not influence your daily life, if you are not moved by them to a higher tone of devotion to God in your daily practice, they are not only useless, but injurious; they are then but a help towards self-deception, and the source of unconscious hypocrisy. Like all great blessings, if profaned to the purpose of mere self-gratification, they become a snare and a curse. But if you come with pure intentions, and an earnest desire to offer up your lives to God, such as you express by the praises of your lips; if you come with a hearty desire to honour God by self-sacrifice and self-discipline, then will these services be your greatest blessing and surest comfort. Then they will gradually tend to purify your hearts, and fit you more and more to join in singing the Alleluia in heaven: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation,



Digitized by Google

and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON VI.

## The Annunciation.

ST. LUKE i. 28.

*"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."*

THE Festival of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, occurring as it does this year on a Sunday, directs our attention to its own special subject in preference to that which the Epistle and Gospel for the season would suggest. This service for the greater Festival, according to ancient custom, takes the place of that which is appointed for the ordinary holydays.

And so to-day we use the Proper Lesson, the Collect, the Epistle and Gospel for the Festival of the Annunciation, whilst we simply commemorate the Fifth Sunday in Lent by its own Collect. I need hardly say that the subject which belongs to this high Festival which we keep to-day, is the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, viewed in its special connection with her, on whom was conferred the blessed privilege of becoming the Mother of our Lord. Isaiah had long before, in words of

Digitized by Google

prophecy, declared that, "a Virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and that they should call His Name Emmanuel." A few faithful ones in every age of the world had derived comfort, amidst the troubles and the wickedness with which they were surrounded, from the primæval promise, that the seed of the woman should eventually bruise the head of the serpent; and they looked and longed for the coming of the Saviour, of whom the prophets spake with increasing clearness as the fulness of time drew near. And now, as on this day, the announcement was made, that He who for so long had been the desire of all nations should come. "In the sixth month," —that is, in the sixth month from the day when the same angel had announced the preternatural conception of St. John Baptist,—"the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the Virgin's name was Mary." She was of the house and lineage of David; for it had been declared that the Messiah should derive His earthly parentage from that family. It was a lineage shorn of its temporal splendour since the days of David and Solomon, but still valuing its privilege as the heir of the greatest promise that was ever made to any people.

So it was to this poor daughter of the stock of David that the angel came and said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." And blessed indeed was she,

Digitized by Google

and is she unto this day; even as the angel declared, and she herself afterwards, when she said, "all generations shall call me blessed." For well might she be called blessed on whom God had bestowed such a special mark of His favour;—a privilege greater than any earthly dignity, than any gift spiritual or temporal which God would bestow or man could receive,—that she should be made the mother of the Messiah, the Saviour of the whole world, of Him who was the Head over all things to the Church, the Son of God. "Blessed, indeed, art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

In thinking and speaking, then, of the highly favoured one, let us not hesitate to apply to her those titles of affectionate respect and reverence which the holy Word of God itself sanctions. Whilst we are careful to avoid the error of those who would ascribe a degree of honour and adoration to her which, we may firmly believe, she is the first to reject, let us guard ourselves against the opposite error of an incorrect, careless, unloving disregard of her, who, from the part which she fills in the development of the mystery of the Incarnation, and her close relationship to our blessed Lord, should ever be an object of deepest interest and affection to every Christian heart. Let us not hesitate to call her *blessed*, and to thank God on her behalf for her great favour,—for the honour that she has received in being made the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ,—and for the exalted graces which we willingly be-

Digitized by Google

lieve adorned her Christian character. Let us not be afraid to attribute to her all that can be said of any human being, and much that can be said of no other human being, merely because some men have attributed to her more than is due to any but God alone.

But though so great an honour was in store for her, how little did she expect it. In the lowliness of her heart it had never occurred to her that so great a privilege could be reserved for her; and that she who was of so lowly a degree should be so highly exalted. And so when the angel Gabriel appeared before her, she was affrighted at the vision, just as Zacharias had been before her. "And when she saw the angel she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." And the angel said unto her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His Name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

We may well believe that the blessed Virgin would be overwhelmed with wonder, love, and praise, on receiving this, the most gracious message that had ever been sent to any created being. Not to Abraham, nor to David had any such promises been made.

Digitized by Google

They were only to see the types of Him whom Mary should bring into the world; they only beheld the shadow afar off of that Son of Man who took His substance of the ever-blessed Virgin. Yet you will observe, stupendous as the promise was, Mary does not suffer herself to doubt of its truth. She does not ask, as Zacharias had done, "Whereby shall I know this?" She does not seek a sign, which is the characteristic of one of an imperfect faith; but, acknowledging that the thing is true, yea, and certain, she only asks for explanation of the means: and this question was so answered as to increase the blessing tenfold. "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." These were words of deep and mysterious comfort, and were but imperfectly apprehended by the blessed Virgin at the time they were uttered. But her genuine humility, and pure and loving faith, do not permit her to question the heavenly message, or to doubt the possibility of what he declares, though to her it is still a mystery. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she says; "be it unto me according to Thy word."

And now, brethren, whilst we fail not to learn a lesson of humility, of lowly obedience, of ready submission of our intellects to the reception of divine mysteries, from the example of the blessed Virgin,

Digitized by Google

let us also fix our thoughts for a few moments on the deep mystery itself, which was announced to her, and which remained more or less a mystery to her for a length of time, until her Divine Son, by the righteousness of His works, and the explicitness of His teaching, gradually revealed its deep significance to her.

Let us, then, fix in our minds and ponder upon the great truth that has been revealed to us in Holy Scripture, and is enshrined in the Church's Creeds as a cardinal article of the faith, that He whose birth was as on this day announced, was none other than the Son of the Highest,—the Son of God,—the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, who, having existed for ever as perfect God, of one substance with God the Father, was willing for our sakes and for our salvation to veil His eternal Godhead beneath our human nature; who, without ever separating Himself from His Divine Nature, condescended to take in addition to it the nature of man, that He might fulfil all the conditions requisite for the salvation and redemption of us His poor fallen creatures. Though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." It was not an angel, however perfect he might have been in heavenly grace and wisdom, still less was it a mere man who came to accomplish the work of our redemption. "God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." To those who looked upon the Saviour as He

Digitized by Google

trod the streets of Jerusalem, He seemed indeed as other men; but beneath that human form there dwelt the everlasting Godhead, at whose creating word the heavens and earth had sprung into existence, and by whose power they were sustained and animated.

Bearing in mind this great and all-important truth, we shall see how it serves to deepen our sense of the humiliation to which the Saviour subjected Himself for our sakes; and although it is always good for us to reflect on this article of our faith, it is especially fitting for us at this season, when we contemplate the bitter scenes of suffering which darken the close of our Lord's life on earth, in order that we may estimate aright their infinite merit and preciousness. For if, in the exclusive contemplation of the suffering Humanity of the dying Saviour we lose sight of His Divinity, then we fail to appreciate not only the infinite merit of His sufferings in the sight of His Father, whereby the world has been reconciled to Him, but also their preciousness to ourselves individually. For as He died as man, in that He suffered the life which He had assumed as man to be taken from Him, so He rose again in the power of His Divinity, in order that He might continually convey and apply to us the justifying and sanctifying efficacy of His meritorious sufferings. "He died for our sins, but He rose again for our justification."

Bearing in mind, then, that it was the Only-Be-

Digitized by Google

gotten Son of God, and as such "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person," whose birth was announced to the blessed Virgin, consider in some of its particulars the portion which He allotted to Himself in this life. Although He was Almighty as King of heaven, He came not here to receive the honour justly due to Him as King and Lord of all; but renouncing all honours and pleasures, He made choice of a life full of toil and ignominies.

His sufferings commence with His very birth. He is denied even the ordinary comforts which surround the new-born infant. In the depth of winter He is born even in a stable; and the Divine Infant lies bound in swaddling-clothes in a manger. A short time after His birth He is obliged to fly as an exile, and wander in a strange land, to escape the murderous cruelty of Herod. From Egypt they returned into Palestine, to live again in Nazareth; but it was a life of lowliness and poverty. He, to whom the whole world belonged as its Creator, was content to live as other workmen and their children do; and was commonly regarded as the son of Joseph the carpenter. And then, brethren, when He came forth to His active Ministry, and to unfold in a measure the unseen glory of His Divinity, He did not assert His claim to notice by any change in His position. The Jews were looking for grandeur, and splendour, and all the signs of temporal power and authority, as the sure tokens of the Messiah, who they greatly

Digitized by Google

hoped would minister to their national pride, and restore to them the sovereignty which they had lost. But He who was the true Messias and the Son of the Most Highest, proclaimed His authority by no such signs. Having been born in poverty and brought up in poverty, now that He goes forth to preach, He changes not His fortune or His condition. On the contrary, He lives in even greater poverty and privation than before. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

And further; as the words of truth and wisdom which fell from His lips were in direct opposition to the prevailing spirit of evil; so, as His Ministry extended itself and its influence became more widely felt, enemies arose up on all sides to attack and persecute Him. Whilst a few remained faithful to Him as His disciples, the great mass of the community, instead of honouring Him, despised Him as an impostor. It had been foretold that He "should be set for a sign that should be spoken against." And truly He was spoken against and despised by well-nigh all. He had in all its sharpness to endure the contradiction of sinners. He was contradicted in His doctrine; for when He asserted His Divinity, saying, "Before Abraham was I am," being unable to answer Him, they took up stones to cast at Him. He was despised in His wisdom; for when they heard His teaching, "They said, He is mad; why hear ye Him?" But still further, His love and

Digitized by Google

mercy, which ignored all distinctions of persons, were made a reproach to Him. "Behold," they said, "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners." His very works of mercy were turned against Him; for He was accused of being a sorcerer, and of casting out devils through the power of the devil. And though He was the Son of God, manifesting the wisdom, the love, and the power of His Divine nature both in word and act, yet had He to endure the implacable hatred of a hardened, blinded, and infuriated people, who desired to justify their demand for vengeance before the Roman governor, by saying: "If He were not a *malefactor*, we would not have delivered Him up to thee."

I proceed no further, my brethren, in the sad enumeration of the Saviour's sufferings. I leave for its own proper time the reverent contemplation of those last scenes of deepest humiliation which the Church recounts to us in all their detail during the Holy Week. Sufficient, I trust, may have been said to excite reflections which may prepare us for more profitable meditation on those scenes when they are set before us. Let us remember that that last sharpest agony of mind and body which marked the Death and Passion of the Lord, was but the filling-up of the cup of bitterness which had been set before Him as His portion to drink throughout His earthly life. From the very cradle to the grave He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The very joys and pleasures which He bestows upon us,

Digitized by Google

which He sanctions as in themselves innocent, and even profitable for us, He denied Himself, because in Him they would have impeded the work which He had to do.

And here, my brethren, let us take one caution. In meditating upon the suffering life of the Lord, let us beware how we turn it into a mere source of excited feeling, without taking to ourselves the practical lessons upon which the usefulness of such meditation wholly depends. Remember, it was for our sakes and for our salvation that the Lord endured His life and death as man. All the circumstances of humiliation, and of trial,—the poverty, the privations, the reproaches and contempt, the fastings and watchings, the mysterious oppressions of soul and spirit to which He subjected Himself of His own free will,—were not to set before us merely an heroic picture of endurance which man might simply admire, but as an example, from which we are to draw daily and hourly lessons for our own guidance. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" "that Christ may be formed in us." "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His footsteps." "Know ye not that so many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Thus do the Apostles represent to us the effect which the life of Christ is to produce in our hearts. It is to be the source of new principles and of fresh motives: it is to teach us the power and bondage

Digitized by Google

of sin, by the greatness of the sacrifice required for its overthrow, and to urge and excite us to do battle with it, each in his own heart, by the victory which Christ Himself obtained. It is to supply us with a right estimate of the transitory objects of sense, and teach us to disentangle ourselves from what impedes our heavenly progress. It is to supply us with principles and rules of life, by which to guide ourselves amidst the temptations and difficulties of the world. But above all, it is to fill us with such a deep and enduring love of Him who hath created and redeemed us, and so to transfix us with the sense of His merciful compassion, that not even the humbling conviction of our own utter worthlessness, and of our daily and hourly infirmities, shall hinder us from relying on the efficacy of His help, seeing that we are the very members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON VII.

## The Incarnation.

ST. JOHN i. 14.

"*The Word was made Flesh.*"

IT is the characteristic of St. John's Gospel that it is concerned with unfolding to us the Divine nature of our blessed Redeemer, through the doctrines and discourses which fell from His lips, rather than with a detailed statement of the outward circumstances of His life. The three earlier Evangelists had been inspired to bring out with prominence all that related to the truth of our Lord's humanity. His regal character as the King of His people, His priestly character as the offerer and provider of His people's sacrifice, His fulness of sympathy as the Son of Man,—had been depicted by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. Those three aspects under which our Lord's Person may be regarded, and which are symbolised by the lion, the calf, and the man, seen in vision by Ezekiel and St. John, had been unfolded; but, as in the vision there was a fourth living creature like unto an eagle, representing the divine and heavenly aspect of our Lord's nature, so we have a fourth Evangelist, whose

Digitized by Google

special privilege it is to soar above the world and all things human, and gazing with undazzled eye upon the Sun of Righteousness, to reveal to mortal man somewhat of the mystery of the Divine nature. While the other Evangelists are occupied chiefly with depicting our Lord's life on earth, St. John is occupied rather with revealing Him to us as the "Word who was with God," who came forth from God; as one who is from heaven, and whose home is in heaven.

Thus St. John is not concerned with any details relating to the circumstances of our Lord's birth; but he proceeds at once to state the great truth of our Lord's Incarnation in terms which should impress us most strongly with its deep mysteriousness. In few words he states this great truth, which is at once the foundation of our faith and the centre of all Christian doctrine—"The Word was made Flesh." The angel had declared that the holy thing which should be born of the blessed Virgin should be called the Son of God; but St. John having told us that the Word was with God from the beginning, and that the Word was God, states explicitly that He, the Word, was made flesh. Thus are we led at once to contemplate the Divine nature of our blessed Lord before His Incarnation, and so to realize more fully the depth of His humiliation in taking to Himself our nature.

We have to believe, then, that the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, He who had been in the bosom of the Father from everlasting, who is the

Digitized by Google

Word, the very expression of the Father's Will, He who had created the world, for our sakes manifested His presence upon earth as really and truly man. He, being God, created unto Himself a human soul and body out of the materials of our nature. And thus He shewed Himself to mankind as God and Man. There was no separation of the two natures, neither was there any confusion. The fact revealed is, that Christ was truly God and Man. His Godhead suffered no abatement by reason of the limitation of His Manhood, neither did His Manhood by the infinity of His Godhead. So, also, we have to bear in mind that though the two natures of Christ are perfect and distinct, yet they are to be thought of as united together in one Person. "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ." Herein, then, consists the infinite mystery of love contained in the truth of our Lord's Incarnation, that God Himself has condescended to come upon earth and become man, — not, you will observe, to assume a mere human form, but to take to Himself our nature in all its completeness, and to limit Himself by the conditions of our true humanity. It may be asked, Why did God adopt this mode of revealing Himself to man? Such enquiries can only perplex without in any way leading to edification. It is for us to accept the truths of revelation as they are set before us, and thankfully to meditate on the love and wisdom they exhibit. It is for us to believe that as our bodies are the organs and instruments



Digitized by Google

by which our souls act, and the channel whereby they suffer, so our human nature was deemed in God's wisdom to be the fitted means by which the Son of God should effect the great work of the salvation of mankind. "Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a *Body* hast Thou prepared Me." Thus the human nature of our Lord was the instrument by which His Divine nature was brought into relation with mankind; it was through it that He, being also truly God, was enabled to complete the work of our redemption? For how otherwise could He have been crucified, and have suffered for us, save by reason of that man's nature, to which these things are applicable? And further; as the soul is the real doer of those things which are effected by the body, so the Godhead of Christ is the true cause of that which His Manhood accomplished. To all appearance He was as any ordinary man, but veiled beneath that human form there was the Divine nature determining His whole outward life, and promoting those acts of love and mercy by which a fallen world was to be redeemed. "Thus God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

Such, my brethren, is the great doctrine of the Incarnation as revealed to us by St. John, and witnessed to by the Church in her hymns and creeds. I have set it before you in all its deep mysteriousness, that we may endeavour to realize it as a truth, though with our limited faculties we can never ade-

Digitized by Google

quately apprehend it. We cannot, I say, understand how the Divine and human natures were brought into such union with each other, as that each should remain perfect in itself; but neither can we understand the wondrous relation subsisting between our bodies and souls. But though we cannot understand or fathom the full depth of this mystery, we can accept it as a revealed truth, and then when we meditate upon it in reverence and faith, we are led to perceive how infinite must be that love that could consent to such deep humiliation, and to marvel at the wisdom which could devise a plan so adequate for the restoration of our fallen humanity.

For reflect, my brethren, what but the exceeding love of the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity could have moved them to take counsel together for the salvation of mankind. What was man that he should claim the pity and love of Him whom he had rejected in wilful disobedience? God had done all that could be done for him. He had made him in His own image; He had stamped His own divine likeness upon him; He had blessed him with His presence, and given him all things necessary for sustaining his life and happiness. And this man, so blessed, so singled out as the object of the Divine affection, rebels against his Maker, treats Him with scorn, and seeking for what he fancied would be greater blessings in the gratification of his own will, he lost all and found himself a ruined man. He stood conscience-stricken before his Maker, and

Digitized by Google

condemned by the justice of God to an eternity of woe. Oh, surely, my brethren, there was no plea for him to urge to stay the hand of vengeance from falling on him. More miserable still, there was nothing that he could do, nothing that he could offer, which could satisfy the offended justice of God, and restore him once more to the Divine favour and love.

And yet, brethren, it was when man stood thus self-condemned and inexcusable before his Maker; it was when by his own presumptuous folly he had made it impossible for himself to endure any longer the presence of his God, or to taste the sweets of Paradise, then it was that the love and mercy of the Creator pleaded in behalf of the fallen creature. God had created man, and He could not cease to regard the workmanship of His own hands with love even after it had been marred by sin. He saw in the fulness of His knowledge all the consequences of that sin. He saw in Adam the head of that race that should people and overspread the whole world, and He saw every individual member of that great family inheriting the polluted nature of his first parent, and liable with him to the same awful punishment. Then was it, my brethren, that mercy and love devised that wondrous scheme which has at once satisfied the offended justice of God, and rendered possible man's restoration to holiness and happiness. Then was it that the infinite love of God sought, by the direct revelation of Himself to man,

Digitized by Google

in such a form as might be apprehended by him, to lead him back to Himself, and to open out a way for his redemption from the sin and slavery to which he had sold himself.

My brethren, that God should give any promise of hope and restoration to His ungrateful creature was an act of most undeserved love; that He should encourage him with those hidden words of promise, —"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,"—spoken so soon after the fall, we feel to have been what he could have had no right to expect. But when we proceed further to contemplate the full development of that promise, and following the stream of prophecy in its course, listen to the inspired voices as they declare with increasing clearness the great truth of the Incarnation, and then hearken to the angels' song as it announces the actual fulfilment of that wondrous event, we can only bow our heads and adore. For reflect, my brethren, how has God come to us? Has He come as some bright angel or seraph? Has He come with any of the tokens of glory which surround Him in heaven? Or if not so, has He come as some mighty prince, with all the outward symbols of power and splendour, to dazzle us with His magnificence, and compel our obedience? Or, again, did He appear all at once as a full-grown man, engaging the attention of mankind by the outward attractions of a commanding person? Not so. He came in none of these ways. When God would come into the world He emptied Himself of His

Digitized by Google

glory; He divested Himself of all His outward tokens of power; and He came not only in man's nature, but was content to be born of a woman. He came to all appearance as others come into the world; He came as a little infant without one single token of power; He came as the poorest of infants, born in a cold stable, laid in a manger on a little straw, without clothing or fire to warm His shivering limbs. Thus was the Lord of glory, the Creator of the world,—the Word, who had been with God from the beginning, and was God,—thus was He content to be born, that He might shew Himself to mankind. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took to Himself man's nature, that He might draw us with the cords of a man.

My brethren, what, think you, urged the Son of God to such unspeakable condescension? What was it that caused the Lord from heaven to be born in a stable? Who took Him from the right hand of His Father, where He ever sits, and placed Him in a manger? Who snatched Him from His throne on high, and laid Him on the straw amidst the cattle of the field? Behold, my brethren, and adore! He who inflames the seraphim with love, is now shivering with cold; He who supports the heavens, is now carried in a woman's arms; He who provides food for men and beasts, now craves a little nourishment to sustain His life; He who is the source of all happiness, is now weeping and mourning as an infant.

Gaze, brethren, upon this picture of utter humi-

Digitized by Google

liation, gaze with adoring wonder, and say whether aught else but love could have moved the Son of God so to manifest Himself to us. Say, my brethren, whether He could have adopted any other mode whereby He could better attract our love to Himself. Had He come in power He might have subdued us to Himself by fear, and we should have stood before Him as trembling animals; but He came, not that He might be feared, but loved. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the word, that we might live through Him." And therefore He shews Himself to us, not only as a man subject to all the limitations of our humanity, but as a helpless infant; and that not only that He may sanctify every age of life, but that in the helplessness of infancy He may attract us to Himself. Thus would He be born, who willed to be loved and not feared.

And now, my brethren, we must surely ask, why does God thus shew His love to us? What does He seek to do for us? What does He seek from us? He seeks, my brethren, to draw you to Himself. Your natural inclinations all tend to sever you from Him. When you were born into the world, you were cut off from Him, for you were partaker in the guilt of Adam's transgression. And though by Baptism you have been brought back to God,—taught once more to call Him Father, and to think of your Incarnate Lord as your brother,—yet are the sinful motives of the flesh ever tending to alienate you

Digitized by Google

afresh from Him, and to cut you off again from the hope of happiness. God, then, was born into the world, as at this season, that He might not only offer a sacrifice for sins and reconcile you to God, but that He might infuse into your heart the principle of love to Himself; that He might win you back from the attractions of the world, its vanities and its enjoyments, to fix your deepest and truest affection upon Himself. He came, shewing you the brightest and clearest tokens of His love to you, that He might excite you to love Him in return. He came to set before you the love of God as the true end of your being, and to impart to you such strength and help as should enable you to shew forth your love in active obedience. And when He thus seeks you, will you flee from Him? When He comes as He does now, telling you of all His self-abasement, reminding you of His birth in the manger, of His life of poverty and suffering, and of His cruel death, will you turn away from Him? Will you say, "That tale of love is most touching; I cannot hear it without emotion; but alas! the inclinations of my evil nature are too strong for me, I cannot fight against them; I must indulge myself now and then"? My brethren, if any man can say this,—and alas! how many say it by their acts,—let such an one remember that at least God could do no more to excite his love and ensure his obedience. If he is not moved at the sight of his God clothed in flesh and enduring a life and death of ignominy, then is

Digitized by Google

there no spectacle which can soften his stony heart. Let such an one take heed unto himself while yet there is time: let him cry to God to have mercy upon him, and to give him the grace and gift of love.

In conclusion, my brethren, let us all determine, both those who are conscious of loving Christ and those who have not yet attained to that blessed state,—let us, I say, one and all, determine to meditate on the wondrous event which this season sets before us. Let us place ourselves in thought before the infant Jesus as He lies in the arms of His Virgin Mother; let us reflect (as we have been doing this evening) on all that is implied by that scene. Let us think how it has brought salvation within the reach of all mankind; how it has placed it within our reach; how it has been the cause of awakening some of us at least to a sense of our danger and our sin since our Baptism; how it has opened out to us the hope of forgiveness, and made a fountain of love and hope and peace to spring up within our souls. To use the words of St. Anselm: "Thy Redeemer hath laid upon thy darkened eyes the ointment of His Incarnation, that thou who couldest not see God shining in the secretness of His majesty, mightest look upon God manifest among men; that looking, thou mightest acknowledge; that acknowledging, thou mightest love; and that loving, thou mightest strive with all thy might to attain to His glory."

Gaze we, then, in earnest contemplation on the scene which, as at this season, was set before men

Digitized by Google

in Bethlehem. Let us draw near with the shepherds; let us fall down before the Infant Child; let us offer Him the homage of our hearts, and dedicate to Him our best energies and powers; let us call upon ourselves and all men in the words of our Christmas hymn, saying,—

"Come and behold Him,
Born the King of angels;
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON VIII.

## The Magnificat, I.

ST. LUKE i. 46—48.

"*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His Name.*"

THERE are scarcely any words of Scripture, I suppose, which are more familiar to us than those I have just read. In accordance with primitive custom, our Church invites us, whenever we offer up the evening sacrifice of prayer and praise, to celebrate God's goodness and mercy in this most beautiful of all hymns; and to express our feelings of humble thankfulness in the very words which fell from the lips of the blessed Virgin Mother of our Lord. She would desire that all her children should be filled with that spirit of conscious gratitude and quiet humbleness of heart which characterized her who spoke these words, and she knows no strain so calculated to infuse that spirit, so well adapted to calm and soften our hearts, to raise our thoughts from worldly cares to heaven, and fix them on our

Digitized by Google

Lord and all the blessings which He has brought us, as this inspired hymn of praise and thanksgiving. But it too often happens that our very familiarity with passages of Scripture, however striking and beautiful in themselves, tends to blind us to the perception of their meaning, and to hinder the impression they should produce on us. Our lips and our ears become accustomed to the words; it costs us no effort, and but little attention, to repeat them accurately; and unless we are careful, by a distinct effort, to fix our thoughts upon them, we may find that we are repeating them more or less mechanically. And this may happen, too, with those who would shrink from the thought of offering to God a mere lip-service; who, though conscious that they are performing a religious act of praise, may all the while be little mindful of the full import of the words which they utter. Nor is there any other means by which we can check this tendency to mere formalism, but by cultivating habits of reflection, and striving, with the aid of God's grace, to understand and enter somewhat into the spirit of the Divine words which are put into our mouths. Thus, for instance, if, following the guidance of our Prayer-book, people would accustom themselves to reflect and meditate carefully and earnestly on the various parts of our services,—upon the selected portions of Scripture, the Canticles, the Psalms, the prayers, and various responses,—they would not only understand better the meaning of our services as a whole, and

Digitized by Google

perceive the reasonableness of various points of detail in the arrangement and celebration of them; but each portion would convey a distinct meaning, and be felt to be a real and adequate expression of certain feelings and affections. And then, when they come into God's house, they would know what they have to offer to Him: the words of their mouth would express the sentiments of their hearts; with their understanding they would enter somewhat into the meaning of holy words, and perceive the depth and value of the truths they contain; and then they would serve God as He requires, with their whole being, and worship Him not only with their bodies, but with their souls and spirits. That I may do somewhat towards helping you in this work, of learning to understand and to enter into the spirit of our services, a work which should be interesting to all who desire to worship God aright, I have chosen the hymn of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly called the Magnificat, for our consideration this afternoon.

For upwards of 1200 years we can trace back the use of this hymn, as forming a part of the services of the Church. Christians of all times and places have delighted to adopt the words of her whom all after ages were to call blessed, and, looking back on the fulfilment of God's promises, and onwards to the accomplishment of future hopes, have desired to associate themselves with her in the joy and thankfulness which overflowed her heart. But that we may understand this hymn of praise aright, we must re-

Digitized by Google

flect awhile on the circumstances under which it was uttered.

You will remember that six months after the angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias, and announced to him that his wife Elisabeth should be the mother of St. John the Baptist, he was sent forth on a second mission, to declare the wondrous mystery of the Saviour's Incarnation, and to announce to a pure and lowly Virgin the wondrous privilege which was in store for her. And in the sixth month, that is from the time of his appearing to Zacharias, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a Virgin *espoused* (viz. *betrothed*) to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." But St. Mary, as yet unconscious of what awaited her, does not understand how the heavenly salutation can apply to herself; and in childlike humility, and yet with that thoughtfulness and earnestness which are marked features in her character, she begins to cast in her mind and muse upon the angel's words. And if her wonder and awe were excited at the salutation of the heavenly messenger, how much more must such feelings have taken possession of her, when she heard the wondrous announcement which followed, and learned that the prophecy of Isaiah should be fulfilled in her? that she should be that pure and holy Virgin

Digitized by Google

who, by the miracle of God's grace and power, should conceive and bring forth a Son,—Jesus, the Son of the Highest, Immanuel, God with us? "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" These words do not express any doubt as to the truth of the angel's statement, but refer only to the mode by which the event foretold was to be brought about. In her childlike innocence, the Blessed Virgin could not but wonder, and in her wonder could not restrain her eagerness to enquire how this great and precious promise should be accomplished in her. And that her faith and humble trustfulness were steadfast, may be gathered from the readiness with which her enquiry is satisfied by the angel. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God;" and then, to support and strengthen her faith, the angel adds a sign close at hand in one of her own kindred. "And behold, he says, Elisabeth thy kinswoman; she herself also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible." Thus does the angel reveal to her the miraculous conception through the agency of the Holy Ghost, by which she was to become the mother of our Lord; and in doing so adds to her feelings of wonder and awe; while, at the same time, he points to one whose

Digitized by Google

circumstances might afford her encouragement, and in whose sympathy she might find comfort. But however great her astonishment at the power of God, and His goodness to her, her faith and humility are no less conspicuous. She not only believes that the word of the angel shall come true, and that the highest privilege that could be conferred on woman should be hers, but she believes without resting for a moment upon the thought of self, and her own exaltation; she shrinks not from the mercies and gifts in store for her, marvellous and unspeakable as they are; she accepts them in trustful obedience, but then passes on at once from herself to the thought of God and His goodness. "Behold," says St. Mary, "behold the handmaid of the Lord;" behold one who knows herself to be God's servant, whose highest privilege it is to be used as His instrument for His own high purposes; behold one who in herself is poor, and lowly, and feeble, but is willing to trust the power of God and to believe His word. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her.

What may have been the feelings of the Blessed Virgin after the angel left her, and she began to muse and reflect upon the wonderful fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament in her person, we are not told. We may well imagine, however, that she would desire to express the mingled feelings of joy and fear which must have been uppermost in

Digitized by Google

her mind, and to share them with one who could sympathize with her. And thus the visit to her kinswoman St. Elisabeth follows naturally after the communication. The distance, indeed, was great, about a hundred miles; but distance and time seemed annihilated in the greatness of the things which were now coming to pass; in which they were to bear so signal a part.

We may conceive, my brethren, how (as she wandered over the wild and mountainous tract which lay between Galilee and the hill country of Juda,) she pondered over the deep mystery that was revealed to her, and marvelled that one so humble as herself should be invested with such high dignity. "It was the time of spring," says one who has commented with great beauty on this incident, "it was the time of spring, when all nature, which had been made from the beginning to typify and prefigure this event, was harmonizing with her condition; in sight of Him who is the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life.

"All nature was conceiving and bringing to birth, and in the gladness that pervades all sights and sounds in the wild natural world, it would seem as if the curse itself denounced on the ground was suspended; or that all things gave indications that it would be overcome. It was the season when light, day by day, is mastering the darkness, and the lengthening days seem to indicate a time when in the true light there would be perfect day and



Digitized by Google

'no darkness at all.' The circumstance itself of this visit, thus disclosed by the narrative of St. Luke, breaks forth as a light amid the clouds that envelope that period of the sacred history, and seems to disclose the figure of the Blessed Virgin herself hastening over the mountains[a]."

For six months had her aged kinswoman St. Elisabeth been conscious of God's goodness towards herself, that He had looked on her to take away her reproach from among men in the promise which was now near its accomplishment, that she should be the mother of that great prophet who should make ready a people prepared for the Lord. She had already experienced the power and mercy of God in her own person; but when brought into the presence of the Blessed Virgin, her spiritual vision was quickened by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. She was at once conscious of the far higher privilege that had been bestowed on her Virgin guest, she could behold in her the mother of her Lord, and rejoice with her in her joy and blessedness. "And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and cried with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women! and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Conscious, through the influence of God's Spirit, of the divine nature of the Holy Child which the Blessed Virgin bore in her womb, and of the superior honour due to her as its mother, she is struck with her own unwor-

[a] Williams.

Digitized by Google

thiness to receive one so exalted. Her humility is equal to her faith, and as the Baptist himself afterwards said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" so the mother now disclaims the honour which was being put upon her, saying, "And from whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? for lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." 'There was no need for thee to impart to me thy high privilege and joy: the child that is yet unborn to me, he who shall prepare the way for my Lord, by a mysterious sympathy was quickened at thy presence, and rejoiced within me.' "And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things that were told her from the Lord." Thus does she proceed, with true humility, from the thought of her own lowliness, in the power of the Spirit, to magnify and confirm the faith of the Virgin Mary, and to pronounce her Blessed, because her faith had not staggered at the greatness and seeming improbability of the Divine promises. And who but one whose whole spirit and life were imbued with a simple, earnest trust in God,—whose whole heart was under the influence of an abiding consciousness of the divine love and goodness,—and whose daily life of quiet, unobtrusive obedience was a daily practice and strengthening of such heavenly principles; who but one diligent in the use, and as such largely endowed with the grace of God, would

Digitized by Google

not have stumbled at so great a trial of faith, obedience and humility? And if one was found, in God's electing love, to stand fast and to give a signal proof of the power of divine grace in the human heart,—if one was found on whom God was well pleased to confer a privilege so great and marvellous in itself, and so mighty in its consequences to all mankind,—surely the title of Blessed may well be hers. Surely we may delight to honour her even as the angel of God and her inspired kinswoman honoured her; surely we should not be backward in giving her that respect and reverence, which are at once dictated by the purest feelings and instincts of our nature, and sanctioned by the Word of God itself. Thus highly did the Blessed Virgin find herself honoured, thus was her faith commended and her joy confirmed. Like all devout people who lived before the coming of Christ, she had looked and longed for the time when the glorious prospects shadowed forth in prophecy should be realized. She had learned to look for the Messias as the Saviour and Redeemer of herself and all the faithful people; but how little had she thought that she should be the favoured instrument of bringing that blessing to mankind. How little had she thought that He who should do such great things, that He who should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, should be born of her, a humble maiden; and yet now she could not doubt it, God Himself had declared it

Digitized by Google

by the voice of His messenger, and confirmed it by the inspired testimony of her kinswoman. How great then was the trial of her humility, how readily would the hearts of most people have been elated with pride at the thought of such peculiar power? How many would have eagerly drank in and dwelt upon the words of praise and gratulation which fell upon her ears from her inspired kinswoman? How many would have fallen into sin when raised to heights so great above humanity? But if the faith of the Blessed Virgin enabled her to receive without doubting the promise which the angel declared; if her faith, so pure, simple and implicit, enabled her to accept without cavilling the word of God, and to submit herself to His will; so did her humility enable her to support the honour placed upon her without risk of sin, and to rejoice, in all childlike innocence and simplicity, in her blessed privilege, without yielding to the tempter's power, or sullying her guileless heart with the stain of pride. The Angel had pronounced her Blessed among women, her cousin St. Elisabeth had repeated the blessing, and praised her faith; but the only response they receive is a ready ascription of all praise to God, and a humble confession of her own unworthiness. Full of tranquil joy and implicit trust in the goodness of Him who has revealed Himself so closely to her; with a vivid recollection of the mercies vouchsafed to Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, and with the hymn of praise uttered by her fresh in her mind, she pours forth the inmost feelings

Digitized by Google

of her soul in a strain of humble thankfulness. "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden."

She thinks not of herself, except as an evidence of God's goodness, and as a motive for praise and thankfulness. With her whole being, with her soul and spirit, she desires to magnify and exalt her Lord; to praise Him and serve Him with her whole nature, with her affections and feelings, with her reason and understanding. For He who is so high above the earth, whose power is only equalled by His goodness and love, hath had respect to her in her poor and humble estate. He hath looked on the humiliation of His servant, and has chosen her as the instrument of His love.

Thus, my brethren, have I endeavoured shortly to sketch out the circumstances which led to the utterance of this divine hymn? On another occasion we may, if God will, examine the full meaning of the hymn itself, and see how aptly it may express the feelings of our hearts.

In the meantime, brethren, let us ponder on the faith and humbleness of heart of her whose words have been handed down to us. Let us remember, that while the angel has pronounced her blessed, we too may earn that title, if we seek like her to believe and to obey; let us bear in mind our Lord's declaration, who, in answer to the exclama-

Digitized by Google

tion,—"blessed is the womb that bare Thee,"—added, "yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." In each, then, let there be the soul of Mary, that it may magnify the Lord; in each let there be the spirit of Mary, that it may rejoice in God. If, says St. Ambrose, according to the flesh the Mother of Christ is but one; yet according to faith the fruit which all bear is Christ.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON IX.

## The Magnificat, II.

ST. LUKE i. 46, 47.

*"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."*

ON a former occasion I endeavoured to set before you the circumstances which led to the utterance of that divine hymn of praise known by the name Magnificat. I called your attention, too, to the deep and tranquil spirit of faith and humility exhibited in the conduct of the Blessed Virgin Mary subsequent to her being made aware of the high privilege which was in store for her. We found those heavenly graces especially indicated in the readiness with which she accepted the wonderful message of the angel, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Thy word." We heard also the highest testimony to her preciousness in the sight of God, by reason of that very faith and humility; for both the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, and St. Elisabeth moved by the Holy Ghost, pronounced her Blessed among women; and furthermore, we found that it was under the influence of feelings springing from these very principles, that

Digitized by Google

the Blessed Virgin poured forth her hymn of praise, whereby she refuses to rest upon the thought of her own excellence, and transfers to God all the glory and the honour.

Imagine, then, to yourselves, my brethren, this holy woman, conscious of the marvellous privilege that was about to be bestowed upon her, that she should be the mother of the Lord; and mindful of the many promises of the Old Testament which would now be fulfilled; fully alive to the height of honour to which she had been raised, and to the excellency of God's goodness manifested through her to His people; imagine, I say, this holy woman thus honoured and blessed, and yet so penetrated with the truest and deepest humility, so free from every thought of selfishness, that she cannot bear even to receive words of praise from her inspired kinswoman, without at once making mention of the Author of all her blessedness. When St. Elisabeth, her cousin, in the fulness of the Spirit, magnified her with words of blessing, the lowly Virgin, passing them by, thinks only how she may magnify the Lord. "And Elisabeth said, Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Like the Psalmist of old, she desires with her whole being to testify to her sense of God's majesty and goodness: "Bless the Lord, O my soul;

Digitized by Google

and *all that is within me* bless His holy Name." She would declare with her soul and spirit, in the full depth of her feelings, and with all the power of her understanding and reason, the goodness and mercy of God, and would rejoice that He has indeed revealed Himself to her as a Saviour. The angel had told her that the holy Child to be born of her should be called Jesus; and now in prophetic spirit the fulness of the blessings comprised in His birth lay spread before her, and in Christ, the Son of God, who should be born of her, she realizes Him who should likewise be her Saviour.

Thus does she commence her song of praise, by at once making mention of Him who is the first object of all her thoughts, and by recounting His mercy to herself personally. And having spoken of God as her Saviour, she goes on to speak more particularly of His favour to her: "For He hath regarded," she says, "the low estate of His handmaiden." She could reflect on the lowliness of her position, and the little reason she had to expect that she of all women should have been chosen for so high an honour. True, she was of the royal stock of David, from whom the Messiah was to spring, but her family had evidently been long in obscurity, and she was now amongst the humblest of the people. Who, then, was she, that of her should be born the promised Messiah? Doubtless, too, there was a deeper feeling to which these words gave expression. She could not but remember the

Digitized by Google

vast and immeasurable distinction between fallen human nature, as represented in her person, and the divine nature of Him, who, being God, in wondrous condescension, was about to be enshrined in her womb; and in magnifying God's mercy for regarding her low estate, she utters thoughts which reach beyond herself to the whole human race, of whose restoration to a higher than its original condition, she was to be the blessed channel. For herein is God's mercy shewn to her, in that He makes her to be the channel of blessings to others; so that according to her own declaration, "from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed." We are indeed to call her blessed, on account of the marvellous privileges with which God honoured her: we are to think with reverence of the fulness of grace manifested in her, the faith, the humility, the love, and the keen susceptibility of heavenly influences, which combined together to bring her will into accordance with the Divine will, and prepared her for the reception of that pure and holy thing that should unite Himself to her.

But though the virtues, and graces, and privileges of the Blessed Virgin herself should lead all men to call her blessed, yet can we not separate the thought of her from the benefits which, through her, have accrued to the whole human race. We cannot forget that she is the channel through which all the blessings and graces which man can hope for have been conveyed to him. In her we behold the in-

Digitized by Google

strument whereby the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God was consummated: in her we behold the person through whom God was made manifest to man; through whom He shewed Himself as Immanuel, God with us. And through her have we been made to share in all the blessings and gifts which flow from God taking our flesh. Human nature has been raised from sin, and received power to subdue the passions, and to triumph over its spiritual enemies. We have been enriched with heavenly graces, we have been exalted to the dignity of children of God; and all, my brethren, through the accomplishment of the great mystery of our Lord's Incarnation; by the fulfilment of His promise, that a Virgin should conceive and bear a son, that a Virgin should be found of whom He would be content to be born. And thus, in the earliest writers on these subjects, we find the contrast pointed out between the first woman Eve and the Blessed Virgin,—that as by Eve came the disease, by St. Mary came the remedy; as "the one willingly took the cup held out by the serpent, and gave it to the man, whence we all have merited death; so the other, endowed from above with heavenly grace, brought forth that life by which our dead flesh is enabled to live again."—(St. Augustine.)

And who, my brethren, but one who was all-powerful and all-wise in Himself, could out of such apparent weakness and helplessness have brought forth such strength? who, but one that was mighty,

Digitized by Google

could do such great things through such humble means? "God becomes Man; the Almighty becomes a helpless Infant; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man; the Lord recognises His handmaiden as His Mother." Who but the all-powerful could use these means to overcome the strength and wisdom of man? "Who but the Lord of glory could choose a lowly maiden to accomplish the oldest of all the prophecies,—that her seed was to bruise the serpent's head?" Well, then, might the Blessed Virgin say, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His Name." Thus does she sum up this first part of her hymn, in which she makes mention of God's special mercies towards herself, by praising His Name for them. As she had begun the hymn by magnifying the Lord, so now, having recounted His favour to her personally, she resigns all the glory to Him that gave it her, and declares whence she received it.

And now, from dwelling on the goodness of God as manifested in her own person, she goes on to speak of it in reference to mankind in general, and to instance the signal benefits which, through the birth of Christ, should result to all men. It will be sufficient, however, for us to apply to ourselves what we have been considering, and to measure how these words of praise and joy which express the Blessed Virgin's sense of God's favour to herself personally, may find a suitable place in the devotions of each one of us. Reflect, then, my

Digitized by Google

brethren, whether we, as well as that highly-favoured one, are not entitled to chant forth our thanks to God for His goodness displayed towards us.

What does that formulary of Christian teaching which is put into our hands for our earliest instruction, what does the Catechism teach us on this point? Are we not told that from having been by nature children of wrath, we are as baptized Christians made children of grace? Do we not therein thank God that He has called us to a state of salvation; that He has through His infinite love placed us in a position in which we may escape the dangers of sin, and be freed from its punishment and power? Are we not therein taught to speak of Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer, because He has, through the price of His own Blood and the power of His resurrection, ransomed each one of us from the misery and danger into which the devil would have brought us, and delivered us from the slavery of sin and the burden of conscience, oppressed by the guilt of unforgiven sin? Are we not taught that we have not merely been saved from the darkest and dreariest prospect, but admitted to most glorious hopes and privileges; that, as Christians, we are not only delivered from the terror of an offended God, who only awaits the appointed time to execute His justice upon His sinful creatures? not only delivered from the certain prospect of punishment, but are made heirs of a glorious inheritance, and entitled to the reward of a share in the kingdom of heaven? And

Digitized by Google

again, that not only has the cleansing stream of baptism washed away the guilt of our fallen nature, but has made us partakers of a new and divine nature? that, as members of Christ, united to Him in baptism, we are quickened by the spirit which flows from Him, and enabled not only to abandon sin, but to do works of righteousness pleasing in God's sight, and to live as His children in loving obedience. For "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 4—6.)

Such, my brethren, is the teaching of God's Church as drawn from holy Scripture, which is put into our mouths from our earliest years of thought and reflection. Such is the faith into which we were baptized, which we all profess to believe, and which some here present are about to declare before God with a full consciousness of its privileges and blessings. And such being our glorious heritage as the new-born children of God, can there be any doubt that we, too, with the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, are entitled to chant forth God's praises, and with her to magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God our Saviour? For has He not in the truest sense regarded, and had respect to, the lowliness of *our* condition? Has He not looked down from heaven, and seeing that we were fallen and degraded, raised us to the dignity

Digitized by Google

of sons, and made us His heirs? Has He not, amid the necessary and inevitable toil and suffering of this present life, imparted to us the grace and power whereby those evils may not only be borne with patience, but be cherished as means of realizing more entirely the high and godlike nature to which He would bring us? Has He not had such respect to us, in the fulness of His compassionate love, as to enable us to ensure tranquil contentment in this life, with the blessed prospect of eternal and perfect happiness in the world to come?

Surely, brethren, these are consequences sufficiently great and marvellous, to entitle us to regard ourselves as blessed in the sight of all generations of men and of the holy angels themselves. We, too, in no pride of heart, in no self-trusting reliance on any merit of our own, but in the truest humility, in the vivid consciousness of God's mercies, may, with the Blessed Virgin, declare that "all generations shall call us blessed. For He that is mighty hath done us great things, and holy is His Name."

Most fitly, then, has the Church put this Divine hymn of thankful praise into the mouths of all her children, desiring to associate them with the Blessed Virgin, who not only experienced in all its fulness the goodness and mercy of God, but by the fruit of her lips gave apparent testimony to the extraordinary presence of the divine Spirit with her and in her. This hymn, full of faith and fear, of humility and love, of charity and devotion, she would desire to be

Digitized by Google

the constant expression of such holy feelings and principles within each of us her children. She bids each one of us, having heard the promises of God which were declared of old to His people read to us out of the Old Testament, to lift up our hearts to God and praise Him for the accomplishment of them—to magnify His holy Name, and rejoice with soul and spirit that privileges which were denied to the saints of old have been bestowed on us, in that those things which prophets and righteous men desired to see, and saw not, have been revealed to us. Seek, then, so to realise your position as redeemed Christians, as to be able to appropriate these divine words to yourselves. Cultivate by earnest reflection and purity of life, such love and devotion to Him who was content to leave His heavenly throne and be born of a pure Virgin, that He might restore us to heaven, as shall enable you to chant forth this glorious hymn in sincerity and truth, sharing in the feelings of joy and thankfulness which animated the heart of the Virgin Mother of our Lord.



Digitized by Google

# SERMON X.

## The Magnificat, III.

ST. LUKE i. 50.

*"And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation."*

SUBJECTS of a more peculiar and pressing interest have for the last few Sundays interrupted our consideration of the hymn of the ever-Blessed Virgin. The special services in which we have been privileged to join, and the holy rites which some among ourselves have been led to seek, have turned our thoughts towards points in immediate connexion with themselves. Having been reminded of the duties, the privileges, and the gifts of grace and strength which belong to all who claim and act up to their position in the Church of Christ; we may now resume with increased interest our reflections upon those words of tranquil joy and gratitude, which the marvellous mystery of the Incarnation and its countless blessings drew forth from her, through whom they were to be revealed and manifested to mankind. For without question we shall find that the more deeply and adequately we learn to appreciate the reality and the value of the

Digitized by Google

spiritual blessings, to which as members of Christ's Body we are admitted; the more earnestly we distinguish between the life of nature, and the life of grace,—between the life of mere earthly enjoyment and that higher life which raises our affections above the earth, and fixes them upon heavenly things,—the more we shall enter into the meaning and spirit of that hymn, which celebrates the mercy of God in opening out to us the source of that spiritual life; and the better prepared shall we be to take up the words of the Blessed Virgin, and with her to magnify the Lord, and rejoice in Him for the great things which He has done to us.

Our last consideration of this hymn brought us to the point at which the Blessed Virgin passes from the thought of God's mercy and goodness, as instanced in herself, to reflect upon them in connexion with mankind at large. She has testified to the power, the wisdom and the mercy of Him, who had such regard to the lowliness of her estate, as to choose her as the honoured instrument of working out the great mystery of the Incarnation. She has not shrunk from acknowledging the marvellous privilege and honour with which she has been invested as the mother of her Lord, nor failed to recognise in the high and dazzling position to which she had been raised, such a special token of the divine favour, as should entitle her in all after ages to be regarded in a special manner as blessed of God. And yet with this high appreciation of

Digitized by Google

the gifts and honour conferred upon her, as one highly favoured of God, she has never once forgotten that she is but His instrument, that lowliness and meekness are the qualities of heart which not only most surely win God's favour, but enable us to retain it: and so though she speaks much of herself, yet her thoughts never rest there, but are carried on at once to God, in whom she recognises the source of all her blessings. She speaks of herself, because God in her has exhibited His highest attributes of wisdom, mercy, and love; and reflects indeed on her own condition, but only that she may take occasion to extol His power and goodness, "for He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His Name."

And now, passing from the consideration of the peculiar blessedness of her own position, she goes on to speak of the token of the divine goodness as manifested to all mankind, and while she would seem (in thought) to embrace all that her experience and knowledge of God's dealings with His people in times past had taught her, in the spirit of prophecy she looked forward to the overflowings of God's goodness upon all the nations of the earth, through the marvellous gift which she should be the means of bestowing upon the world. "And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation."

The history and experience of past times would supply her with ample testimony to the truth of

Digitized by Google

this declaration. In the fortunes of her own race she could find the sure indication of the inseparable connexion between the fear of God, rendered to Him as the homage of a devout and reverent heart, and the mercy of God exercised towards man as the free expression of the divine goodness. And this divine attribute, by which God had revealed Himself so freely in times past, in having compassion on man's fallen estate, and in preparing and disciplining him for better things, how was that mercy now shining forth with redoubled brightness in the approach of Him, for whom all who feared God in former ages had looked and longed. In herself, as the mother of her Lord, the Blessed Virgin might behold the honoured instrument through whom the precious gift of mercy in all its fulness was to be bestowed on mankind at large. For no longer should one favoured people alone claim God as their Lord and Governor; but all the people of the earth should be made to feel and know that in the birth of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, they had found Him in whom they should all be united as one family, as very members of Himself, the reconciled children of their heavenly Father. She would now understand the meaning of all the tokens of God's mercy in times past, and behold their fulfilment in the birth of the Son of God. The promise of redemption first given to man, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; the care and protection vouch-

Digitized by Google

safed to the chosen family of Israel; their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; the peace and assurance applied to their consciences through the typical rites and offerings of the Law; their fasts and feasts, the paschal Lamb, and the atoning blood of sacrifice; all these various means by which the mercy of God had been manifested and applied to His people of old, would now find their fulfilment in the great mystery of the Incarnation,—the coming of Christ in the flesh, in whom mercy and truth embraced each other, and through whom the Almighty Father was able, without prejudice to His justice, to extend that mercy and loving-kindness to all men.

But, my brethren, if God is plenteous in mercy to them that call upon Him and serve Him in fear and obedience, He is also sure to visit with the severity of His justice those who in pride rebel against Him. In Him mercy and justice go together, and those who will not be won by the constraining influence of His love, are compelled to submit to the irresistible power of His wrath. "He hath shewed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek." The Blessed Virgin finds in the punishment and overthrow of God's enemies a fit subject of praise, because therein the power and the goodness of God are being clearly exhibited. She remembers how by the strength of

Digitized by Google

His arm the enemies of His chosen people Israel had been overthrown. How by the hand of Moses, the cruelty and oppression of the Egyptians had been defeated and punished, and Israel brought forth with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. She remembered how the idolatrous and rebellious nations in the land of Canaan had fallen before the prevailing strength of those who fought with the Lord on their side; she recalled, too, the victories of David over those who endeavoured to harass and root out the Lord's people, whom the Lord Himself had established by the strength of His arm.

But the words of the Blessed Virgin must be taken as referring not only to what is past, but to what is to come. Speaking as she did under the influence of the Spirit, she anticipated the mighty effects to be produced by the birth of the Only-Begotten Son incarnate in her, and realized the victory which He should gain, not only over the visible but the invisible enemies of God. In her own countrymen, who in the pride of their hearts were looking for a temporal kingdom, being lifted up with their descent from Abraham, she might behold that spirit of ambition and covetousness, which would entail upon them the wrath of God, and cause them, when they had rejected the Lord, to be themselves rejected of Him, and scattered over the face of the earth. She might anticipate the time when all the maxims and principles of the world, and all its vain idolatries, supported as they were by all the

Digitized by Google

strength and influence which wealth and power and learning, and the custom of ages could lend them, should have to yield to the doctrine of the Christian faith; when the teaching of a few humble fishermen should exercise such influence upon the hearts of men, as to lead them to reject all that they had hitherto most esteemed, to put aside as worthless what the world counted most precious; to forsake the riches and the comfort of the earth, for the unseen things of heaven; to risk their very lives in support of the truth which they had learned; to a time when a new value would be given to all things, when poverty would become honourable, and lowliness become exalted, and great things become small, and the religion of the lowly fishermen of Galilee would become the victory that overcometh the world. Well, indeed, might the Blessed Virgin declare in prophetic spirit, "He hath shewed strength with His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek."

And as these words apply very directly to the triumph of the Church of Christ over the powers of heathenism, so do they also find their fulfilment in the individual Christian. For what, my brethren, is the life of each earnest follower of Christ, from the time of His baptism, but a series of struggles, in which the grace of God proves victorious over the proud and rebellious passions of his unregenerate

Digitized by Google

nature. Surely there is no one who has realized the power of temptation, by striving to resist it, who has not in the hour of trial lifted up his heart to God for aid, and in the hour of victory, felt that it was indeed the arm of the Lord that supported him; that it was indeed God who had shewed strength with His arm, and braced him for the trial.

And so, brethren, throughout the course of the Christian's life, these words will be constantly receiving their fulfilment, and constantly supplying the truest comfort and assurance. Day by day, as the Christian advances towards perfection, he will bear witness to the reality of that strength of which the Blessed Virgin speaks. He will find daily and hourly fresh spiritual enemies springing up within him, calling him to the conflict; passions, and tempers, and affections, and desires, which have to be either entirely cast down and rooted out, or controlled and chastened. And day by day as he is able honestly to reflect upon some victory gained, to point to some bosom sin which earnest self-discipline has weakened, if not entirely subdued, he will call to mind those words of the ever-Blessed Virgin; he will thank God that He has in him shewn forth the strength of His arm, through the power of His grace, and will find encouragement for future trial in the thought that God will in the end exalt the humble and meek.

But, my brethren, it is the very characteristic of the dispensation which the Blessed Virgin contem-

Digitized by Google

plated, that the humble servants of God are not only strengthened for victory over their enemies, but filled with an inward satisfaction of their spiritual needs; and her words are remarkable, as being the first clear annunciation of these peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, as they are afterwards set forth more fully in the Sermon on the Mount. "The hungry He hath filled with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away;" even as our Lord Himself declared, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

In the Blessed Virgin herself we see this principle of the divine dealings exemplified. In humble faith and earnest obedience she had turned to good account the gifts and graces implanted in her, and thus won the increase of them. In the purity and sincerity of her heart she had ever sought to conform her will to that higher law which had been revealed her, whilst in her humility she had ever distrusted herself, and craved and longed for higher knowledge, and a clearer insight into divine truth. And now the hungry soul was filled with good things. She should be the mother of Him who would be the Truth itself, and whose words, as she pondered them in her heart, should be the very nourishment and strength of her soul. And as with the Blessed Virgin, so with every Christian. The law by which the increase and bestowal of the Divine

Digitized by Google

gifts and graces is regulated, is ever the same; and earnest longing for them, and a diligent use of what already is ours, are the necessary conditions of further increase. To those who hunger and thirst, He gives; to those who deem themselves already full, He imparts nothing of His grace or gifts. And surely in one very special way we may regard these words as fulfilled in connection with our Lord. For does He not fill all those who come hungering to Him, with the most precious of all gifts? Does He not feed all the faithful to the end of time, with the bread that cometh down from heaven, even with Himself? Do not all who draw near in faith to His holy Table, partake of the rich banquet of His Body and Blood, and find in that heavenly food the strength and refreshment of their soul?

And now, as the Blessed Virgin recounted the gifts and graces which through herself were to flow to mankind, she could not but reflect upon the long time of waiting that had preceded the birth of the promised Saviour. To Abraham the promise had been given, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and since then well-nigh two thousand years had elapsed. That, indeed, had been a time of patient longing to all holy men, during which they had walked in the dim twilight of the Law and the Prophets, looking for the time, which now at length was at hand, when the Sun of Righteousness Himself should arise, and disperse the shadows which oppressed them. But God is faithful who has pro-

Digitized by Google

mised; His word cannot fail, however long its accomplishment may be delayed: "He *remembering* His mercy hath holpen His servant Israel; as *He promised* to Abraham and His seed for ever." He seemed, indeed, to have forgotten His promise to the fathers; but now He has manifested and fulfilled it in Christ.

Thus, brethren, are we brought to the conclusion of this song of praise and thanksgiving: and the more we have examined it, and the more closely we have reflected upon it, the more reason have we found to admire and wonder at its simple beauty, and its marvellous depth of meaning. This, indeed, is the hymn, as one has said, to which nothing can be added, and nothing taken from it; embracing all the Gospel, its mercies, its doctrines, its precepts, its judgments, its covenant with the true Israel. of God, and the fulfilment of all the prophecies going before. This is the hymn of the Church, the hymn of our Lord, the hymn of all hymns; "the perpetual incense" of the evening sacrifice, rising daily before God "with the prayers of the saints."

Brethren, as we chant forth these divine words, let our thoughts revert to that blessed one who first gave utterance to them. Let the Virgin mother of our Lord be remembered with feelings of reverence and love: let the purity and humbleness of heart, her earnest gratitude and thoughtful piety, excite in us the like heavenly tempers: let us strive

Digitized by Google

to realize more fully the magnitude of our blessings, that so these words may be a true expression of our joy and thankfulness. Let us, above all things, remember that though she who spake them was in an especial manner blessed, they, too, are blessed "who hear the word of God, and keep it;" that though the Blessed Virgin, as the mother of our Lord, had peculiar and special cause of joy and gratitude, so, too, each individual Christian has ample cause for joy if only he will believe and obey, that so the Word of God may dwell in his heart, and Christ be gradually formed within him. Let us, then, so live in humility, love, and obedience, that in each of us there may be the soul of Mary to magnify the Lord, in each of us the spirit of Mary to rejoice in God our Saviour.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XI.

## The Royal and Priestly Character of Christians.

REVELATION i. 5, 6.

"*Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*"

THIS doxology or thanksgiving, as you will perceive, is an ascription of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for the blessings of redemption, and the privileges thereby conferred on mankind. Standing as it does in the front of that book which was intended to gather up all previous revelations into one, and to set forth, however mysteriously, the revelations of the Divine will for the future, it acquires a peculiar significance. He who "bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of the things which he saw," knew, as a matter of personal knowledge, that it was the Word made flesh, who had manifested the Divine love, and revealed the Divine will unto fallen man. That He it was who had brought life and immortality to light, that all His creatures might be delivered from misery

Digitized by Google

and death. He knew that that Word had been on earth, and suffered and died, that the enslaved bodies and souls of men might be set free; and now, therefore, that he is about to shew unto God's servants things which are to come to pass, and to declare in whom, and for what ends, God reveals Himself in different ages, he sets forth clearly the blessings which have been already revealed, and claims the redemption which had been wrought for himself and all mankind as a ground of praise to Christ, who had loved him, and given Himself for him. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Here, then, we find two titles of great dignity and honour represented as having been conferred on those who have shared in the love of Christ, and been cleansed by Him from the polluting and enslaving power of sin. All those whom Christ has loved and redeemed have been raised from their former condition to the rank of kings and priests. Let us consider this awhile.

Now, if we regard our condition apart from Christ and all He has done for us, what do we find it to be? Is it not true that it is one of thraldom and of fear. If we appeal to the heart and conscience of any unhappy being who has ignored the life of grace, has taken no note of his position in the Christian Family, has either never heard glad tidings of salvation, or

Digitized by Google

neglected and spurned them; if, I say, you appeal to the heart and conscience of such an one, what answer will he make, if he dare answer you at all? Will it not be a dismal tale of the growth of sin within him, of its early beginnings in the unchecked faults of childhood, of its gradual progress in stifling the voice of conscience, and so leading its unhappy victim from repeated acts of increasing guilt into confirmed habits of sinfulness? Will not his whole life testify to the dominion which the inferior part of his nature—his passions, his appetites and desires —have usurped over the internal and spiritual part of his being. There is that within which, in his better moments, has convinced him that the end of his existence, the purpose for which he was created, was something better and higher than the mere slavery of impulse and passion. The spirit within him has pleaded in behalf of its higher destinies, but in vain; the will is no longer free; the power of choice seems to have passed away; he cannot shake off the chains which hold him fast; he has become the slave of a tyrant, whose service is a perpetual thraldom. And he is not only deprived of all true liberty, of all power of self-control, he is also oppressed with fear whenever his thoughts travel beyond this world. His conscience has borne witness to him of an all-powerful and holy God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. But what has he to do with purity and holiness? What communion can there be between two beings so utterly different? The more

Digitized by Google

conscious he is of God's power, the more he will dread the thought of Him; the more conscious he is of God's holiness, the more he will feel that he is at enmity with Him. And thus, ignorant of the love and mercy and tenderness of the Divine Being, viewing Him only in His attributes of Power and Justice, he will feel that there is an impassable gulf of separation between them.

Now see, brethren, how the Gospel message meets such an one as this. It tells him of One who has come forth from God Himself, that He might declare His love to man in spite of his fallen and ruined state. Jesus Christ is, as St. John calls Him, the Faithful Witness, who, as the express image of the Father's Person, and being filled with all the brightness of His glory, comes to manifest the Divine Light and Love, and to make known their power and blessedness to mankind. He comes not merely to declare that love in words, to tell men that there is a Being who yearns for their welfare, and desires their happiness, but He comes to reveal it, as a Person, in acts and in modes which belong to the region of human thought and sympathy. He tells each individual sinner that for him, and such as he is, He has been willing to associate Himself with every form of misery and suffering, that no one might think that he was beyond the reach of the Divine sympathy and love. He reveals to him the true nature of God—that He has ever been the same, "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and



Digitized by Google

truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." But though the thought of this loving and compassionate Creator is full of comfort to the returning sinner, yet there will still remain the burden of sin upon the conscience, and the bondage of sin overpowering his better and higher aspirations. The God of love may, in His compassion, remit the punishment of past transgression: but sin, the cause of punishment, that of which each person must accuse himself, which is so intensely individual and inward,—how is the polluting and enslaving power of this evil principle ever to be taken from him?

My brethren, it is in this deliverance that we have the very proof of God's love. He that loved us has also washed us from our sins in His own Blood. The outpouring of the Saviour's Blood upon the cross was not only the seal and confirmation of the divine love and forgiveness, but more than this; as the consummation of His own life of perfect obedience, and of His entire victory over the tyranny of Satan, it has become to us the blessed assurance that we shall be delivered from the thraldom of the evil one, and have strength to triumph over our spiritual enemies. To every one who enters into the pale of the Christian family, however ignorant he may hitherto have been of his privileged position, however guilty he may have been in time past, however burdened for the present with the sense of his habitual transgressions, yet to such a man there is

Digitized by Google

but one and the same message, that by the Blood of Christ he is emancipated from his sins; that he is in possession of a liberty by which Christ Himself has made him free; that as Christ in man's nature has, through suffering, learned the lesson of obedience and of entire conformity to the Divine Will, so all those who are one with Him in the community of the same nature, have become sharers also in His prevailing strength. Apart from Christ, abiding in evil practices, and habits, and principles, a man may be a slave in spite of Christ's redemption. Thousands are such; but let them not imagine that they are forced as it were by some fatal necessity into sin. Christ has broken in sunder the chain which bound them. His mission on earth was to deliver them. He has not only convinced them of sin, but He has provided the means by which that sin may be cast out and destroyed. He, the God-Man, Christ, has united all mankind unto Himself in His death, that they may be also partakers of His Life.

And now, brethren, we shall be better able to understand the force and meaning of those titles of honour which the Apostle does not scruple to apply to Christians; nor was he singular in so doing. St. Peter, in his Epistle, had made use virtually of the very same expressions, when he consoled and encouraged his Gentile converts with the assurance that they were a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people. It is clear, then, from the preceding remarks, that what man,

Digitized by Google

in his corrupt and fallen state, needs is, first, that he should be enlightened as to the true object of his allegiance, and then that he should be enabled to control and exercise dominion over the usurping power of sin within him. Now it is because Christ has done this for us,—because He has revealed Himself to us as our rightful King, who claims the homage of our hearts,—because He has convinced us that the law of sin in our members is no part of our original nature, but a direct violation of the true law of righteousness which has been written in our hearts and consciences,—because He has reclaimed us unto Himself, and re-asserted for us individually the authority and dominion over the powers of evil, which He Himself came to establish and carry out in all their fulness in His own life, and death, and resurrection,—it is because He has done all this for us that we, as His united members, are spoken of as sharers also of a kingdom. For since He has taken our flesh and blood, that we might be partakers of His Sonship, so we have a portion in all the honour, and dignity, and power belonging to that Sonship. He has, therefore, invested us with kingly authority. The right of government over the earth, which was assured to man at creation, is redeemed for him in Christ. Earth is henceforth the instrument of his purposes, not the mistress who may command him. And that, because he is now enabled to reclaim that other more precious prerogative of ruling himself. Depending on the might of Christ, and filled with

Digitized by Google

His Spirit, he subdues and overmasters the evil within him, and becomes a king over himself. In this way the basest and poorest amongst us is ennobled, and exhibits, in the free exercise of this dominion over whatsoever would degrade him, the sure title to a crown of glory in the world to come.

But, my brethren, we have found that it is not only the deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the re-assertion of our true allegiance to a heavenly King, that are required to restore peace and harmony to the sinner's soul. There is, too, a sense of dread and of consequent separation from God which oppresses him, and seems to drive him back into utter despair. How can he, stained with sin as he is, dare to hold communion with the all-pure and holy God? How can he presume to ask from God the aid which he has become conscious can come from Him alone? How can he have access to the Father, and be enabled to repose in confidence upon His love?

My brethren, these questions have received their answer in what are found to be the very purpose and end of our Lord's mission on earth. He came not only to declare that God is Love, and that all His creatures, fallen though they be, are still the objects of His affection, but He came to be the Mediator between God and man. He came that He might be not only the channel of the Divine love and grace to man, but also the Head and Representative of their race, that in reliance on the atoning merits of His sacrifice, they might hold commu-

Digitized by Google

nion once more with heaven. When man had nothing which He could offer to God worthy of His acceptance, and dreaded to appear before God empty-handed, then Christ came to make a sacrifice of Himself on the cross, that henceforth man might plead its atoning merits before God. If He came as a king to assert His dominion over us, and to make us sharers in His kingly power; so also He came as our great High Priest, to offer up a sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, that He might acquire for ever the right to mediate between heaven and earth; and by investing us His members with the privilege and dignity of the priestly office, might empower us also to offer up spiritual sacrifices which should be well-pleasing unto God.

It is in virtue of this our priestly character as Christians that we are bidden to present ourselves, our souls and bodies a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto God. It is in relation to the great sacrifice of the cross and through the virtue flowing from it, and communicated to us by Christ's own appointed means, that we are enabled to work and spend ourselves for our heavenly Father, in the sure hope that our labour of love will be acceptable unto Him. It is because we are members of His Body, and have His Spirit indwelling within us, that we become worthy to be offered to the Holy God. And thus the sacrifice of the death of Christ, which is perpetually commemorated and presented here on

Digitized by Google

earth in the blessed Sacrament, is not only the ground of acceptance of all the offerings which we can make to God; but it also binds us by the law of sacrifice, and obliges us to conform to it. The devotion of all that we possess, and all that we acquire, to the glory of God, becomes not only a possibility for us, but a positive duty. Christ, the great High Priest, has given us the power of offering for ourselves, of sacrificing ourselves for the good of others, of feeling with our brethren, of bearing their burdens, of surrendering our wills and affections to Him to do His appointed work; and having the power we dare not refuse to exercise it. He, as the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering; so, too, we His faithful followers must cast out any selfish feeling, and rejoice that we are found worthy to make any offering of our wills to God.

But besides the daily and hourly acts of self-sacrifice which will characterize the life of every Christian, and indicate his priestly office, there is one special offering in which he joins, wherein he exercises that office still more clearly: I mean the offering of worship to Almighty God. "By Him, that is by Christ," says S. Paul, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of the lips." To worship God and to praise Him is the very first instinct of a being who has learned to love God, and to realize His love in return. But then this worship can only be acceptable so

Digitized by Google

far as it is identified with the offering of Christ. Christ, as our mediator and intercessor pleading His own great sacrifice on the cross, is the only ground of our acceptance. It is solely because of His unchangeable priesthood, which he is ever exercising in Heaven on our behalf, that we are enabled to hold any communion with the Father. And thus it is that the Holy Eucharist, being the appointed means by which our Lord's prevailing intercession is pleaded most effectually, and the strongest pledge of His perpetual presence and power amongst us, becomes the centre to which all other acts of worship converge, and from which they all derive their reality as acceptable offerings to Almighty God. Then, when we know that Christ is with us in His Holy Sacrament, we can draw near with full assurance of heart; we can offer up our praises, our prayers, and our thanksgivings with a firm faith in their acceptance, because we feel that they are consecrated by His Presence. In the offering up, then, of the sacrifice of prayer and praise, each individual Christian, in virtue of his union with Christ, exercises the duties of that priestly character which belongs to us all alike, without derogating in any degree from the special authority which has been conferred on those who are the appointed guardians and dispensers of the Word and Sacraments.

Now, considering Christian worship in this light, as an act in which each individual member has to

Digitized by Google

take part, as something, in fact, which he has to do, we seem to acquire a somewhat different idea of it from that which too generally prevails. We are reminded that one chief reason for our gathering together for holy worship is not to gain something for ourselves, but to give expression to our feelings towards the great object of all worship, even God Himself; that we come not so much for the purpose of edification, as to offer up the adoring homage of our hearts in acts of praise and thanksgiving. We are reminded that the preaching of the word of God, though most necessary for us in this our imperfect state, is no part of that worship which we as Christians are privileged to offer up. We learn that the service of prayer and praise, and not the sermon, is the offering we are entitled to present to God; and that whereas the preaching of the word is an ordinance adapted and restricted to this life only, the praises and thanksgivings which we offer here are but the faint echo of that more perfect and glorious service which saints and angels continually present before the throne of God in heaven. And thus considering our worship here as the type of that which is carried on in heaven, we are led to feel that no means should be neglected by which it may be made to express its meaning and purpose; no external aid should be withheld by which the worshippers themselves may be led to take their part as reasonable and intelligent beings, exercising the highest privilege of their Christian calling.

Digitized by Google

See then, my brethren, how great are the blessings which we each one of us possess, as the redeemed children of our heavenly Father; see what a contrast is our present position to that which it must have been apart from Christ. Fallen from our original state of purity, polluted by sin, the slaves of the evil one, with our inmost being disorganized, and full of hard thoughts of Him from whom we had strayed; we have once more in Christ been restored to holiness, and peace, and happiness. He has washed us from our sins in His own Blood, that He might make us kings and priests unto God and His Father. Henceforth we are all raised to a new and regenerate condition in Christ, in order that with a continual remembrance of the deliverance He has wrought for us, we should be daily actuated by that spirit of self-oblation, in which He offered Himself to God. Let us, then, ask ourselves how far this law of self-sacrifice and of self-mastery has moulded and influenced the course of our lives. Let us remember that its characters should be written upon our thoughts, our words, and our acts. That in every relation of life its elevating and controulling power must be acknowledged, casting out from us every hard and selfish thought, every indolent and self-indulgent habit; knitting us closer to our brethren, and stimulating our utmost activity in works of love and sympathy. And whilst we strive to the utmost to obey this law in a free spirit of love, let us never

Digitized by Google

forget that it is through communion with Christ, and in the strength of His Sacrifice alone, that we can fulfil its high requirements. Oh! let us bear in mind that it is in acts of adoring worship, whereby we realize His presence, and are made partakers of His spirit; it is in those solemn assemblies wherein we assert our membership with Christ, and plead His merits most effectually; above all, as partakers in the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood, that we are to obtain the grace and help to fulfil our mission as kings and priests unto our God.

Suffer me then, my brethren, to point out to you that to help to maintain the services of the sanctuary, and to make them as worthy as we can of the great object of all our worship, is a duty and privilege of every Christian. In them he draws near to his heavenly Father; in them he offers to God the sacrifice of his lips conjoined with the homage and devotion of his heart; and through them he has applied to himself the very life of his soul, and the spiritual food by which it is sustained. On these grounds, then, I ask you to give of your worldly substance, and conform to the law of sacrifice by which you are bound, in support of the choral services of this church. Such services are felt by many to be the truest and most adequate expression of the religious worship which our Church invites us to offer to Almighty God. They are

Digitized by Google

valued, I trust and believe, not only *because* they are musical, but because, being musical, they help those who join in them to realize and express with their own lips the idea of active worship. The simple and, to unaccustomed ears, the somewhat rugged strains in which the Church's songs of praise are carried up to heaven by the united voices of choir and people, remind him that his business here, is not to be drawn into some dreamy sentimental kind of meditation, but to be occupied actively in praise and thanksgiving, and other acts of holy worship; and thus he is taught to understand the real meaning and purpose of the services in which he is engaged, and, because he understands them, to take an interest in them and to love them. It is not, then, expecting too much to look for help from those who worship in this church towards defraying the necessary expenses, and they are by no means trifling, which are incurred in the maintenance of the choir. It will be felt, I am sure, that the very value of these services to us as means of spiritual help must depend upon the loving and grateful spirit in which we avail ourselves of them. We must therefore be willing to testify, by the offering of our worldly substance, that we do in them find the greatest help towards devoting ourselves more entirely and perfectly to God, or we may be only deceiving ourselves, and pandering to our self-gratification. We must be willing

Digitized by Google

on this, as on every other occasion of our lives, to obey in a free, loving and filial spirit, the law of self-sacrifice, or we may find that we are forfeiting the privileges which have been conferred on those who have been made kings and priests unto God.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XII.

## The Christian's Vocation.

EPHESIANS iv. 1.

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."*

WE read in the Book of Genesis, that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." Man was, then, in very truth the image and glory of God, designed to set forth the wisdom and goodness of his Maker, and to exercise dominion over all the rest of creation in token of his superiority. Supplied with everything that could minister to his wants and increase his happiness, he lived in the light of God's countenance, and drew from it fresh powers to shew forth his glory, a deeper insight into His wisdom, His holiness, and His love. The worship and service of his Maker was the constant employment of his life, nor amid the perfection of everything around him was there anything to distract him from it.

Such, brethren, was the noble purpose of man's creation; such was the design with which God formed him out of the dust of the earth, and placed

Digitized by Google

him in the garden of Eden, surrounded with everything that could enable him to fulfil his Maker's will. God's service, and the enjoyment of the blessedness of His Presence, were set before him as the ends and objects of his existence. You know how, in the pride and wilfulness of his heart, he frustrated these designs of mercy; how, instead of contenting himself with a loving obedience to God's commands, he ate of the forbidden fruit, whereby his eyes were opened to a knowledge of good and evil, and the blessedness of innocence was for ever lost. And ever since that terrible Fall, what a melancholy contrast has man presented, both in character and condition, to himself as he came forth from the hand of his Creator. How fearfully has the image of his Maker been marred, until scarcely any traces of his divine origin can be discerned. The seeds of corruption have taken deep root in that once pure and perfect nature; and as generation succeeds generation, the poisonous influence, instead of wearing itself out, is constantly reproducing itself, and thus ever supplying a fresh source of misery and loss. And as lapse of time fails to mitigate the evil, so, also, do mere learning, riches, increase of refinement, or general prosperity. The evil, it is true, may be now kept out of sight, and to one who looks only on the outside of things it may seem to have decreased in virulence and extent; but if we care to search, we shall quickly discover that it is as powerful as ever, working, perhaps,

Digitized by Google

by more insidious and secret means, yet constantly developing itself in every variety of form and shape. It matters not to what age or country we turn, in all we shall find sickness, poverty, pain, and death, with an endless catalogue of consequent miseries to bear witness to the contrast between man's present and his first condition.

Nor is it only in his outward and material circumstances that this difference will strike us, but also in his character and conduct. The service of his Maker, and the advancement of God's glory were, as we have said, the appointed purposes of man's being; and for the due accomplishment of these he was provided with all necessary strength and assistance. He was not only designed to live in dutiful obedience to God, but he had the power to obey. But since the Fall how entirely has his condition changed! It is not only that man's body has become heir to every species of pain and suffering, and ultimately to death; this were a minor evil compared to that spiritual corruption that has infected his innermost moral nature, thereby rendering him unable to carry out into act what both reason and revelation declare to be the end of his being, and the only source of his happiness.

Look, brethren, at the world at large, and is it not clear that sin has so corrupted the heart, weakened the power of the will, and alienated the affections from God, that man has substituted as the end and object of his life something very different

Digitized by Google

from the love and glory of God, something, in fact, far more congenial to his degraded nature? Has not each man set up himself as the end of his being? Are not his thoughts, feelings, and desires bounded within this narrow compass? Ever since man fell from his state of innocence, and became subject to sin, it has been so. He has continually lost sight of what was the great and noble purpose of his existence. He has forgotten that Master who alone has a right to claim his allegiance, and always been willing to accept the service of Satan, so attractive to his evil heart. And so, as the world has grown older, wickedness and guilt have increased, and man has been estranged from that God in whose very image he had originally been created.

Are we then to infer, since man's nature has become weak, and his will inclined to evil, that therefore the purpose of his existence and the appointed business of his life, as originally designed by his Maker, have been changed? Is he no longer called upon to devote himself to God? Is the advancement of God's glory no longer his chiefest duty? Doubtless the natural man refuses to recognise any such claims; he rebels against any such submission; he turns with eagerness to pursuits and aims which have no reference to God; and his acts tend far more to dishonour than to glorify his Maker's Name. But still, although man does shew his unwillingness and natural inability to serve God, can we say that such service is no longer his duty, no longer the very



Digitized by Google

end and purpose of his being? Had man been left in the state of wretchedness to which Adam's sin had reduced him, he must, indeed, have felt that whatever might have been the original purpose for which he was created, that it was beyond his power to fulfil it; that the whole bent of his nature was so strongly towards evil, that no convictions, however decided, could enable him to resist it. But still God's purpose must ever have remained the same. It would still have been man's duty to serve God, although alas, he would no longer have had the power to do so. A great and noble work would have been set before him, but he would have sought in vain for the means to accomplish it. The service of his Maker in this life, and the happiness of heaven in the life to come, would still have been proposed to him as the appointed end and object of all his exertions, though he could never hope to attain them.

But such, brethren, we know, is *not* our case. We know, that by the mercy of God we have not been left in this most miserable of all conditions, with a work beyond our power to carry out, and blessings set before us beyond our reach. We know that God has had compassion on His poor fallen creatures, and is unwilling that the glorious workmanship of His hands should perish. In His infinite wisdom and mercy He found means to strengthen and build up our fallen nature, and to enable man to recover what he had lost by his own pride and

Digitized by Google

wilfulness. By the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, by His condescending to be made partaker of our humanity, man's nature in His Person became re-invested with all that strength and glory which was its intended portion and original right. It regained its former perfection by being united to the Divine nature. Once more all the graces and powers, which at the beginning had shone forth so brilliantly, and denoted clearly its divine origin, resumed their place; and man in the person of Christ was again restored to the image and glory of God. And thus, brethren, by virtue of our union to Christ in baptism, we draw, as from a fountain, that strength which enables us once more, in spite of natural infirmities, to devote ourselves to God; we derive from Him that purity which gradually casts out evil passions and desires, and that holiness, not indeed our own, but communicated to us by His grace, whereby we become more and more sanctified.

We see, then, that we are in a double sense called to the service of God. First, as having been created by God for that particular purpose; and secondly, by being specially set apart and strengthened for its fulfilment in holy baptism; and it is doubtless to this that the Apostle's words refer: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Let us, then, consider a little more at length the nature of the calling wherewith we have been called

Digitized by Google

in baptism. We have, then, already seen how, since the fall of man, the sin and evil have taken root in the world, and are constantly enabled by a variety of means to overthrow God's laws of truth, justice, and holiness, and to introduce discord and confusion where all was once unity and peace. "The whole world," as St. John says, "lieth in wickedness." It has been delivered over for a season to the dominion of Satan, and he is ever labouring day and night to take advantage of the power that has been given to him, by craft and subtlety to spread throughout the world his enticing allurements; to draw men by actual sin more entirely within his grasp; to darken their hearts, and to obscure their knowledge of God. Thus he endeavours to procure for himself slaves to minister to his will, to assist him in carrying out his grand purpose of corrupting mankind, and fitting them to be his companions in an eternity of woe.

This, my brethren, is the evil world into which we are born; this is the service which is endeavoured to be fixed on us as soon as we are able to act for ourselves. And it is this very service, this tyranny rather, from which we are called in our baptism. We are called on to renounce Satan and all his works, and the follies and vanities of the world, and the desires of our own evil nature, and all that can tend to the increase of his power. We are commanded to separate ourselves from the evil that is in the world; not to imagine that by any amount of care and caution we can avoid coming in contact

Digitized by Google

with it, and being subjected to its influence; but ever to be on our guard against its approach, to cast it from us when it strives to cling to us, and in our thoughts, our words, and our actions, to strive to overcome it. Moreover, we are called on to take part in a great struggle, to throw aside all ideas of self-gratification, and to be willing to face much difficulty and self-denial in order to come off victorious. We are called on to cast in our lot with our Saviour Christ, who has Himself conquered sin and Satan, to range ourselves under His banner, and like good and faithful soldiers, having put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, to engage with confidence in the fight. We are not, as many would seem to think, merely called to choose between two masters; but having chosen, we are required to be active and energetic in advancing the interests of Him whose servants we are, and therefore strenuously to oppose His enemies. We have not been called to an easy, indolent life of mere nominal Christianity, but to a real, determined and enduring opposition against sin and evil. In sure trust in the power of Christ we are to go forth into the world, to struggle against all the various forms in which sin and evil invest themselves. On all sides we find ourselves surrounded by them: we are attacked both from within and without; by evil passions and tempers, corrupt affections and impure desires from within, and every species of temptation, suiting itself to all characters and temperaments, from without.

Digitized by Google

Many will say it is hard to realize that so great a struggle lies before them; and doubtless it is one of the miserable consequences of our own corruption, and the debasing effects of accustoming ourselves to sin and evil, that we do fail to recognise as we ought the vivid contrast between good and evil, between sin and holiness. The keenness of our moral sense is so blunted that we cannot perceive the intense repugnance of one to the other. And yet we may be sure it was no light matter that caused the Apostle to speak of it in the terms he uses: "Finally, my brethren," he says, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God. . . . For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." Be sure, then, that as Christians, called of God and endowed with strength for the fulfilment of the great purpose of our existence, that of serving Him, we are called and bound to take part in this great struggle. And surely, brethren, any exertion, any toil, must seem light to one who can only appreciate the honour and blessedness of this calling.

Rescued, as we have been, from the darkness of heathenism, and delivered from the tyranny of Satan; called out of darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel truth; from dependence on our own weakness, to faith and trust in Christ; from sin and all its miseries, to holiness of life; from the doubts and torments of an evil conscience, to peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, to mutual love and

Digitized by Google

charity instead of selfishness and strife; from the fear of the wrath to come, to the hope of eternal life;—surely this is a high calling, this is a position that may well require from us the exercise of all our faculties and energies to fulfil its demands. Well might St. Paul speak of us as being partakers of a "high," a "holy," a "heavenly[a]" calling, and feel anxious lest we should fail to walk worthy of it.

And if we look around us, or what is far better, search narrowly our own hearts, can we say that the Apostle's fears have not been justified, or his exhortation needed? Men shew no lack of activity and industry in their various worldly callings; they know full well that without these qualities it is useless to think of success; that if a man merely takes to a trade or profession without giving his time, his thought, and his energies to it, that he must be left behind and outstripped by his more diligent competitors. Real active exertion is admitted to be a necessary condition of success; and only let there be the prospect of increased income, or of the enjoyment of larger worldly comforts, or of a higher respectability and a better position in society, and men will willingly work and toil, aye, it may be, even to the loss of health and comfort; they will "rise up early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," in order to attain all or any of these objects. And yet remind them that as Christians they have been called to a far higher and nobler profession than

[a] Philipp. iii. 14; 2 Tim. i. 9; Heb. iii. 1.

Digitized by Google

any that this world can supply; bid them devote the like energy to their eternal as to their temporal interests, and they scarcely understand what you mean; so little do they realize how great and important are the requirements of the Christian profession. For truly if men could once be made to feel what is required of one who would really walk worthy of his vocation, they would at once see that like our worldly callings it requires incessant care, watchfulness, and diligence.

Is it, my brethren, a light and easy matter in a world steeped in wickedness, to live a life of purity and holiness? And yet to this we are bound. "For," says St. Peter, "as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Is it easy to control our thoughts and imaginations? to keep them from dwelling on the suggestions of the evil one? to draw them off from the vanities and follies of the world, and fix them on holy objects? And yet it is by our thoughts that the state of our heart is tested; and the Master whom we serve is a discerner of the thoughts. Is it easy to love God better than anything that this world can supply? to be ready to give up what may seem most precious and most necessary to our happiness for His sake? to relinquish every evil habit, no matter how severe the wrench, simply because He has commanded it? And yet it is our Saviour's especial injunction, that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

Digitized by Google

all thy mind. And lastly, is it an easy matter to exercise true charity, which of all others is the characteristic of the Christian? To love our brethren as ourselves; to be as careful of our neighbour's good and welfare as of our own; to see in every one around us, be he high or low, one that has a claim on our love, our sympathy, and our aid?

If it can be said that it is easy to fulfil these duties, which are but a few of what are required of the Christian, then, brethren, we need not be surprised at the listlessness, the indifference, the inattention, the apparent unconcern with which men set about them. But who is there that has striven with true conscientiousness to walk worthy of his calling in these respects that has not, on the contrary, found himself harassed with many obstacles and difficulties? Who is there that has made the trial that will not confess that it has brought him into constant collision with sin and evil; that it has been impossible to avoid an open conflict, and that nothing but constant watchfulness, and persevering diligence, will enable a man so to wield the weapons of God's grace as to overcome the many spiritual enemies to which he is exposed?

Be sure, then, that the Christian's calling, as it confers on him the highest honour, and enlists him in the service of his Lord and Saviour, so it exacts from him the entire devotion of his whole being. Do not imagine that the duties of so high a post may be carelessly or irregularly attended to; be-

Digitized by Google

ware of bringing disgrace upon so holy and high a calling; lest, in so doing, you should be putting to shame Him whom you are bound to serve. Let the Christian reflect upon all he knows, all he professes, all he believes, all he hopes for as a member of Christ, and then say whether it is consistent with common honesty and gratitude to allow himself to be drawn away from such weighty, because eternal, matters of interest, to the trifling vanities of a deceitful and perishing world.

Let, then, the Apostle's exhortation sink deeply into your hearts when you are tempted to forget your high position before God, and to lose sight of the glorious purpose for which you have been anew created. When God's glory and your own sanctification are fading in your estimation before the glittering objects of worldly desire, then let the Apostle's words, from his prison at Rome, sound in your ears, and turn you to better and nobler pursuits: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." And thus shall also the Apostle's prayer be fulfilled, "that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ[b]." To whom, &c.

[b] 2 Thess. i. 12.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XIII.

## The Christian Ministry.

1 CORINTHIANS iv. 1.

"*Let a man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*"

I HAVE been desirous, my brethren, during the four weeks of Advent through which we are passing, to direct your attention to the subjects which the compilers of our Liturgy have deemed most suitable to the time, and most calculated to fit us for the celebration of the great festival so near at hand. With this view, on Sunday last, following the teaching of the Collect and Epistle for the day, I spoke to you on the subject of Holy Scripture, and endeavoured to point out what a store of patience, and comfort, and hope is laid up in the sacred volume, and how great is the privilege of possessing so inestimable a treasure.

I propose, then, to-day to look to the same source for the direction of our thoughts, and in so doing I find that we are invited to dwell on the Christian ministry. In the Collect we pray that the ministers and stewards of the divine mysteries may prepare and make ready the way for Christ's second coming,

Digitized by Google

even as John the Baptist prepared men for His first coming; we pray, further, that this preparation may be effected by turning men from the folly and wickedness of disobedience to the wisdom of holiness and willing obedience, and that the result of this diligence on the part of God's ministers may be shewn in the mercy and favour which shall be bestowed upon those among whom they have laboured in the great day of account. The Epistle also sets before us the same subject, referring, as it does, to the nature and character of the ministerial office, and to the light in which those who are invested with it are to be regarded by their fellow-men.

Now before I proceed to notice any errors which men are liable to fall into on this subject, let me say a few words on the general necessity of the Christian Ministry, and the need which it supplies. There is always a greater danger of our becoming so accustomed to the gifts and blessings of Providence, as gradually to lose sight of their value. When we have never known what it is to be without any particular blessing, we are very apt to think lightly of it. It does not attract our attention, or we fail to form a correct estimate of it, because we can scarcely realize to ourselves what it would be to be deprived of it. That is the case with *all* the blessings which God has bestowed on us for any length of time, and with which we have become familiar; such as health and strength, our faculties and talents. We take them as matters of course, as long as they are ours,

Digitized by Google

and it is only when by some visitation of God we are deprived of them that we begin to be conscious of their full value, and to wonder how we could have esteemed them so little when in our possession.

Now this tendency to undervalue God's blessings will shew itself, unless we are on our guard, in our low estimate of the Christian Ministry. It is just one of those blessings to which, as we grow familiar with it, we shall attach less and less importance. It is bestowed on us unsought for: it is procured by no efforts of our own, and is a blessing of which we have never entirely known the want. Throughout the length and breadth of this land we find churches, and an order of men specially appointed to minister in them, and to labour amongst those who are committed to their charge. I say, we are so familiar with this state of things, that we can hardly realize to ourselves what would be the consequence of losing it, or in what condition we should have been had the blessing never been ours; and that unless we do force ourselves to reflect upon the pressing nature of the want that this gift supplies, we are in great danger of undervaluing what is in truth most necessary and most precious.

I need not devote any time to the task of proving to you, that without the Christian Ministry the religion of Christ could not have taken root and spread amongst the nations of the earth. It must be evident to every one of you, that unless the Apostles and their fellow-labourers had been set apart and

Digitized by Google

devoted to the one great purpose of preaching the doctrines they had received from their Divine Master, that the remembrance of the life of Christ and all the marvels of His words and actions, much as they might have impressed men at the time, would very soon have faded away; and though some few faithful and loving hearts might have treasured up the words of Divine truth, and held fast to their belief in Christ, yet such devotion must have died with them, and the mass of mankind would once more have been enveloped in the darkness of heathenism. And can we think that the necessity for this order of men came to an end after the first planting of the Christian Church, or that there was less need of it even when the doctrines of the new religion had been universally accepted, and approved themselves to the hearts and consciences of men. Let us suppose that men had been left each for himself to seek for the truth, and to rely entirely upon the enduring vividness of their own convictions to guide them in the right way, and enable them to judge rightly. How, think you, would the interests of religion have fared when brought into competition with the world and natural inclination? Would the force of religious truth and of divine precepts have been so keenly felt at all times as to cause obedience? Are men generally inclined to give weight to religious considerations when they contradict their own desires, or views of temporal interest? Are men's consciences generally so clear and unsullied, as on all occasions to

Digitized by Google

reflect the truth? and are their hearts so deeply imbued with Christian motives, as to supply them at all times and make them felt?

Brethren, your hearts and consciences can supply a ready answer to these questions. We know full well from experience how deaf we are to the voice of conscience, even when it *does* speak to us most clearly; how easily we lose sight of every motive but what conduces to the gratification of our own inclinations; and how entirely religion is apt to be forgotten amid the manifold occupations and distractions of the world. True it is we have the sacred volume, the very fountain of all truth, always at hand, and ready and able to guide aright those that have recourse to it in a humble and teachable spirit. As it lies upon your shelves it is a witness against every species of sin and worldliness; but then it is a silent witness; it is a warning which cannot make itself heard; it cannot follow you from place to place; you must study its pages with much earnestness and diligence before you can be impressed by its warnings or its encouragements.

Doubtless, my brethren, you can never in its proper place estimate too highly the value of this treasure, which has been committed to the keeping of the Church for the benefit of her children. But in order that its value should be fully felt, it must be taken in connexion with other gifts. Do not let us imagine that the Scriptures alone could keep alive the flame of religion, or ensure the salvation

Digitized by Google

of men. The Bible contains the message of God to man; it tells us all what we are to believe and to do; but that message must needs be proclaimed in our ears; it must be forced upon us when least agreeable; its application to our own life and conduct clearly explained, and the hopes and fears of a future life set constantly before us, to overcome our forgetfulness and indifference. Without this our religion would necessarily become a mere theory, a mere shadowy set of opinions, without any power of influencing our actions. The world and its innumerable temptations would soon enjoy an undisputed sway over us, and truth and holiness would gradually be driven from the face of the earth. We need, then, to be continually reminded of what affects our highest interests. We require to have the motives and aims of a Christian life kept alive in our hearts, and the voice of warning and exhortation sounding in our ears, in opposition to the false but confident promises of the world.

This, then, is your need; and it is in the gift of the ministry that we find that need supplied. God's ministers are the humble instruments by whom He condescends to work. He sets them apart, that they may have the time to devote to this great and holy object. He commissions and authorizes them to regard it as their peculiar mission and office to speak in God's Name to His people; to be instant, in season and out of season, in exhorting, in preaching, in consoling, and in rebuking.

Digitized by Google

Men may push aside the message of God as written in His Word; they may shut their ears to what the Lord says; but if a messenger of Christ meets them on the way to enforce, to repeat afresh what the Lord hath said, then they may be stayed on their evil path; then, at least, they have a double effort made by God in their behalf; and though they snapped asunder the first cord of godly restraint, they may be stopped by the second. Thus the ministers of Christ are like the prophets of old, sent to say what the Lord saith, to be the messengers to men of those divine messages which men might not read themselves, or might read and forget.

And so, brethren, we find that from the very beginning of the Christian Church, this divinely-appointed order of men has ever existed. We can point to no period of her history where she was destitute of the duly authorized ministers of Christ. In spite of all her troubles, persecutions, and corruptions through which she passed, the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries were ever preserved to her, whose duty it was to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

Such, then, is the gift that has been handed down from age to age by the merciful providence of God, until it has reached your own time. God's ministers are still amongst you,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, each in their respective vocation, are labouring to advance the cause of Christ; to proclaim the knowledge of His truth, to celebrate His worship,



Digitized by Google

and to minister to His Sacraments. During this very week, my brethren, the Bishops of the Church will execute one of the highest duties of their office, and make choice of fit persons to serve in that sacred ministry; and so solemn and important does the Church consider this choice, that she has set apart certain especial seasons for it, four in number, that men may know when their ministers are being separated to their holy functions, and that they may implore God's grace and assistance for them. This very week the choice will be made, and on Sunday next, those who have been found worthy of such an office will be publicly ordained. That solemn service for the Ordination of Priests and Deacons, which some of you on a former occasion were privileged to attend in this church, will then be celebrated, and the Bishop, in exact conformity to the usage of the Apostles, will set apart, by Laying on of Hands, those who are henceforth to labour as Ministers of Christ.

Such, then, being the clear necessity that exists for an order of men, such as we find established among ourselves, it must be very important that we should understand aright the nature of their office, and the regard that should be paid to it. From the very earliest ages of the Church there have been erroneous views on this subject. The Epistle whence the text is taken was written by St. Paul mainly in consequence of certain divisions that had sprung up in the Church of Corinth out of an entirely false

Digitized by Google

estimate of the Christian ministry. St. Paul exposes this error in his Epistle, and sets clearly before his readers the true nature and character of the ministry, and the respect that is due to it. "Let a man," he says, "so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" and this passage, which was written by St. Paul in reference to himself and his fellow-labourers, has been always considered equally applicable to the ministers of Christ in all ages of the world. Let us, then, learn from it, that the institution of the Ministry is not of human, but of Divine origin and appointment. The authority which the minister of Christ claims is derived from no human source, but from Him who is the Head of the Church, even Christ Himself. He it was who sent His twelve Apostles, bidding them go and teach and baptize all nations, and promising to be present with them even unto the end of the world. Here the minister of Christ finds his warrant and commission; derived not from any human authority, not from any inherent power of his own, but from Christ Himself, who alone could give it. And therefore he is set apart for his holy office, not as men in general are appointed to worldly offices, by the voice of the people or the will of the State, but by members of the sacred ministry, who have themselves special authority for that purpose.

Remember, then, my brethren, that when the minister of Christ is celebrating His Services, administering His Sacraments, and preaching His Word,

Digitized by Google

he is not engaged in this work in obedience to the will of man, but of God; not because men have thought it expedient that there should be such an order of men devoted to such objects, but because the commission has gone forth to him from one who has authority to send him into the Lord's vineyard, and bids him there labour, because it is his Master's will that men should be instructed in Divine truth, and fed with the mysteries of His holy religion. He speaks to you not in his own name, but in the name of his Master who has sent him. "We are ambassadors for Christ," says St. Paul, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God[a]." Whether men hearken to or reject our testimony, we are bound to proclaim the terms which the Great King offers to His subjects; to declare with all freedom and boldness the consequences of sin, as well as the rewards of holiness. You can easily understand, then, that when men slight the warnings and despise the reproofs of God's ministers, they are guilty of no ordinary sin. They are not only rejecting one of their highest blessings, and shewing themselves unworthy of it, but they are insulting the Great God in the person of His appointed ambassador. Think you, my brethren, that the Jews were guilty of nothing more than ordinary cruelty when they rejected and persecuted God's prophets? Those holy men were full of all boldness, and did not scruple to expose and

[a] 2 Cor. v. 20.

Digitized by Google

condemn the wickedness of their countrymen. They were God's messengers, sent by Him for that especial purpose, and He suffered them to fall a prey to the violence of men who were too deeply steeped in sin to forsake it, and yet not so hardened but that they were stung and exasperated with the voice of truth. And at the great day of account, when these men shall stand face to face, the Jewish persecutors and the murdered prophets, will not the heinousness of the crime be made manifest? Surely, then, when God acknowledges his messengers, the truthfulness of their testimony, and the earnestness of their labours, their enemies will stand confounded at having rejected so high a power, so holy a commission, entrusted though it be to weak and fallible instruments. The Great King will then most assuredly avenge any slights that may have been offered to His appointed servants. He will consider their cause as His own, and because they have laboured for His sake, have suffered, not for their own profit, or in striving for their own advancement, but through a humble but earnest desire of bringing men to His service and making them obedient to His will, He will consider Himself to have been rejected in their person.

And this conviction of the Divine commission of God's ministers, whilst it impresses us with a sense of the deep guilt of wilfully despising and rejecting their testimony, should preserve us from falling into another error of an opposite nature, viz., that of regarding them as the teachers of any particular class

Digitized by Google

of opinions, or as only to be esteemed for their wisdom and talents. This, brethren, was the very error into which the Corinthians fell. They exalted their teachers into the heads of sects. One said, I am a follower of Paul; another, I follow Cephas, and a third declared himself a disciple of Apollos. Each man declared himself the partizan of one or the other, according to his fancy; and thus was transferred to the man personally the esteem and regard that was due only to his sacred office. They were highly valued and hearkened to, not because they were God's servants, because their talents commanded the admiration of their hearers, but because, in their character as mere men, they spoke or wrote with eloquence and ease. Now it was to correct this false and pernicious error, leading, as it must do, to division and contention, that he at once declared that he was not the leader of a party, not the head of any one set of men, but the minister of Christ. He was not among them to labour for his own glorification, or to attach them to himself by the display of talent, or preaching any particular opinions of his own, but simply as the servant of Christ, speaking words to them which could only affect them for good, so far as they were brought home to their hearts as the words of God and not of man. If they could not look beyond the talent which clothed the truth of God in words of wisdom to the truth itself as coming from God, they would miss all its force and benefit. Let us, then,

Digitized by Google

beware lest we fall into the same error as the Corinthians. It is one that is common to all ages. Men are ever too ready to set up some one person as their leader, and in their admiration of the man, his talents, or personal qualifications, to forget God. They will readily listen to his words; but why, because he speaks words of wisdom, or because he speaks God's words? because he speaks as a man endued with great ability, which may belong to any man, or because he speaks as the chosen and commissioned minister of Christ? Too often we are affected only by personal considerations, without regarding that much stronger claim upon our respect, namely, the authority that attaches to the ministerial office.

The only true safeguard, then, against this very common error is to keep visibly before us what St. Paul has declared to be the true character of the Gospel messengers, that they are "Ministers of Christ." Think not, my brethren, that there is any danger in applying such lofty language to the weak instruments whom God has pleased to set apart for His service. Nothing can tend to humble them so much, and to destroy all longing to exalt themselves at the expense of others, and raise themselves as leaders of factions, as the conviction that they are the ministers of Him who found no favour among the great and the powerful, who was content to choose the fellowship of publicans and sinners, and came to bind men together into one great and holy

Digitized by Google

family. And what has already been said is confirmed by that other title which the Apostle applies to the ministers of the Gospel, viz. stewards of the mysteries of God. They are not masters; they are servants. They are the servants of Christ, who has committed to them certain sacred and important trusts. From Him they have accepted that trust, and to Him they are accountable for its due performance. They have been appointed as the dispensers of the merciful provision made by Christ for his weak and erring servants. They are the express guardians of those holy mysteries of truth and grace which are the very life and support of the Church. To them it belongs to unfold those wondrous truths,—the mystery of a world sunk in misery and sin once more reconciled to God; the mystery, greatest of all, of God manifest in the flesh, of the Son of God coming down from His heavenly throne to raise men from their fallen state, to purchase their salvation at the price of His own blood, and to unite them once more under one head, even Himself, and make them children of a Heavenly Father; the mystery of man adopted into the family of Christ in Holy Baptism, and the mystery of that Holy Sacrament whereby he is strengthened and fed with the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Christ.

These, my brethren, are the sacred treasures that have been committed to the keeping of God's ministers, for them to dispense as faithful and diligent stewards to those who have a right and title to

Digitized by Google

them. They themselves have no peculiar interest in them beyond that of all the children of Christ. They dare not appropriate them to themselves to the exclusion of others; they stand only as the distributors of the treasures of God's mercy and truth to all who are, equally with themselves, the objects of God's love and forgiveness. Remember, then, that though the stewards of God's mysteries have, indeed, a most solemn and weighty trust imposed upon them, that you and all those to whom they minister *as* stewards have *their* trust also and *their* duty to perform. To you are proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, the privileges of union with Christ, and of being partakers of the manifold treasures of grace. To you Christ speaks in the person of His ministers. He cries aloud to you to turn from the path of sin to a life of holiness. He warns you by His threatenings, and encourages you by hopes and promises. He reminds you that you, too, have a high vocation, of which you must walk worthy; that you must strive in this life, by diligence and earnestness, with much self-denial and a courageous opposition against sin, so to fulfil your duty, that in the second coming of Christ you may be found acceptable in *His* sight, who then shall execute *in person* the promises and threatenings now proclaimed by His own commissioned servants, "the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XIV.

## The Christian Sacrifice.

ROMANS xii. 1.

*"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

IN the preceding chapter the Apostle closed the argument, wherein he had unfolded the mystery of man's redemption and of all the manifold blessings depending upon and flowing from it, with an ascription of praise to God for the wisdom which had planned and communicated these gifts to mankind: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Having thus set vividly before his readers the Divine wisdom and compassion, as exemplified in acts of the freest and most unconstrained mercy, he passes by a natural transition to speak of the effects which these mercies should produce on the heart and conduct; and putting them forward as the very

Digitized by Google

ground of his appeal to his readers, he exhorts them to make the best, the truest, and the fullest return to God in their power, nothing short, in fact, of the devotion of their whole selves, body and soul, to His service. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Here, then, is the point suggested by this verse for our consideration, namely, what return shall we make to God for all the benefits that He hath done unto us; what offering can we make to God in token of our gratitude and of our love.

And here, before we proceed to speak of the offering itself which is required of us, it may be well to say a word in reference to the figure under which St. Paul speaks of it. He tells his readers to present their bodies as a sacrifice to God, thus using an expression which, however faintly it may reveal its meaning to some of us, must have pictured most vividly to his Jewish readers the very idea which he intended to convey. The whole subject of sacrifice was familiar to them, and was even then being constantly brought before their eyes. The selecting the victim pure and spotless, the procession to the altar, the offering of the entire animal to God, the shedding of his very life's blood upon the altar, all this they were in the habit of witnessing; and but a few years back, before their conversion to Christianity, had themselves taken part in it.

Digitized by Google

To us there is no idea more inseparably connected with sacrifice than the entire devoting and giving up of the whole victim, be it what it may, to God. The surrender of it into the hands of the Priest; the offering it on the altar, and giving back its very life to Him from whom it had been originally derived, all this marked as clearly as possible the completeness and unreserved nature of the offering; and it was an idea that could not fail to have been impressed on the minds of those to whom the whole subject was familiar. It was, then, to this impression that St. Paul appealed, when he besought them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. He desired to lead them to associate the same idea of completeness and of entire surrender to God with the Christian as with the Jewish offering, and to teach them that if the mercies of God to Christians require from them a thank-offering at all, it must be one that, like the sacrifices of old, is to be given up wholly and entirely to Him.

So much, then, may suffice to shew the meaning of the figure used by the Apostle to denote the Christian offering, and the intention with which it was employed. We find, however, a word connected with it, which at once distinguishes the Christian from all other sacrifices; for we are told that it is to be "living." No sacrifice, as we have seen, under the law was complete until the life of the victim had been poured out upon the altar; but with the Christian sacrifice it is far otherwise. The Blood of the

Digitized by Google

Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world, having been poured out once for all upon the Cross, —henceforth the shedding of blood forms no part of man's service to God. The life is indeed to be devoted and given up to Him, the offering is to be whole and entire; its energies and powers will be God's, because engaged in His active service, and offered up to Him as it were in acts of obedience. Again, St. Paul tells us that the Christian sacrifice is to be holy and acceptable unto God. If it is to be acceptable, we may be sure that it must be pure and holy. No victim with any spot or blemish on it was allowed to be brought to God's altar in sacrifice. It was the pure and spotless lamb that found acceptance with God; it was the pure and holy offering made by our Lord, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, that sufficed to open the treasure-house of God's mercy to fallen man. Holiness and purity, then, must characterize the Christian's offering, if it is to ascend as a sweet savour unto God.

But where, brethren, is the victim in which these various qualities are to meet? "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Look, brethren, to your own selves, and behold each man in his own person the very victim which God requires; the very offering which, presented in faith by each one of you, shall be acceptable to Him who has made us an holy Priesthood, that we should offer up spiritual sacrifices. St. Paul says, "I beseech you, brethren, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice," because

Digitized by Google

it is through and by means of our bodies that we manifest the bent and direction of our inward being. Our bodies, as you know, have no power of themselves; separated from the inward and spiritual part of our nature, they become unmanageable and mere useless encumbrances; but when directed and controlled by the will,—that mysterious power within us, which in its turn is affected by our reason, our affections, and desires,—they become the most powerful instruments for good or for evil; and the very means by which a man's whole being, by which his very self, may be delivered over unto Satan, or be presented as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God. But the offering must be unreserved and undivided. It must be the united effort of the various parts of our nature, combining together for the reasonable service set before us as Christians. The reason must be held in check and purified by faith, the affection must be raised above the earth, the appetites and desires controlled and regulated, and the will, resisting every influence, save what would conform it to the will of God, must put forth its power through the instrumentality of the body in acts of holy obedience. We cannot make an offering to God and to the world at the same time: we cannot serve God and mammon: to one or to the other our will must incline us, but to both it cannot.

Speaking generally, then, the Christian's offering will be the directing and regulating the whole of his life and conduct according to the revealed will of

Digitized by Google

God. In thought, and act, and word, the same ruling desire will prevail, to make them subservient to the glory of God and to the advancement of His Will, rather than to his own passing gratification. But in order that we may understand this matter more clearly, let us consider some of the consequences which will flow from the fulfilment of this great duty, and which will test the character of the sacrifice presented by us.

First, then, its effects will be seen in the earnestness and zeal with which we discharge our respective duties. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is a precept which can never be fully obeyed until we regard all that we have to do in this life as the means and opportunity of presenting a sacrifice to God. If our whole self with all our living energies and powers be God's, if our very being, with all its complicated and wondrous machinery, of thinking, speaking, and acting, be not our own, but bestowed on us in mercy, that we may have wherewithal to make an offering to our God, then can no action be trifling, and no duty unimportant in the performance of which these powers are employed. Once, brethren, by God's grace, impress yourselves with the truth that the great end of your being is to offer it up to Him from whom you derive it, and the effects will not fail to shew themselves in the carefulness with which you will commence, and in the diligent zeal with which you will strive to carry out, every act of your life. Your

Digitized by Google

daily occupations, whatever they may be, will no longer be troublesome burdens, to be shaken off as quickly as possible, but will be thankfully accepted as the means of sacrifice, whether of body or of mind. The great object will be, not to get through the daily task with the least amount of labour and inconvenience to ourselves, but to execute and complete it to the very best of our ability, in spite of the trouble it imposes on us. It will be to you as a part of the offering which we are called on to present to God; and therefore, to make it as pure and perfect as you can, by doing it with your might, will be your highest desire.

And so, brethren, in every act and choice of your life, the same thoughtfulness and care, the same conscientious diligence will evince themselves. Whether in your homes, or in the world, or in God's House of Prayer; whether occupied with family cares, or attending to your business, or in seeking relaxation from care and toil, or offering up the sacrifice of prayer and praise to God in the congregation,—under all and each of these various circumstances the same thought will be uppermost in your mind, How can I turn this opportunity into a means of service, and make the most acceptable offering to God?

Once more, this view of the end of our being as a sacrifice to God will shew itself in the tenderness of our conscience, and in our increasing sanctification. Holiness and purity are found to be inseparable from every acceptable offering. To cherish sin within and

Digitized by Google

to indulge a will in disobedience, must be utterly inconsistent with the idea of making an offering of ourselves to God. Having once resolved through Divine strength to enter upon this work, and to regard ourselves as consecrated to God, the sense of sin, with all its polluting and debasing effects, will become more and more abhorrent and repulsive to us. For though we must ever remain stained and defiled with evil, and liable at any moment, through presumption or carelessness, to add to those deeper stains of wilful sin, yet through the cleansing and quickening power of the Spirit, the conscience grows more sensitive and more quick and sure in discerning the slightest approach of sin, and acts and thoughts which once caused us no sort of uneasiness, will, as our spiritual eye becomes clearer, be seen in their true light to be inconsistent with that pure offering which is required of us. And so no habitual or casual indulgence in violation of God's will can be regarded as venial and trifling, because it is the sure indication that the entire offering of our own will has not been made; that we are still holding back and refusing to make the sacrifice due from us. The sin itself may seem a small one, but as long as it is cherished with us, to be indulged even it may be but seldom, it is sufficient to turn God away from us in anger, and to prevent any offering of ours from finding acceptance with Him. It is the heart and will yielding to the directing and purifying influence of the Spirit, who would bring them more and more



Digitized by Google

into harmony with God: it is their striving against the assaults of sin, and casting out one by one every evil habit of thought and act, in killing and mortifying the spirit of selfishness, which is at the root of all sin: in their growing more conscious of the power of sin, more sorrowful for the past, and more hopeful and earnest for the future: it is in this that the sacrifice of the heart and will consists. This is the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which God will not despise; this is the reasonable service required of us, "a spiritual ministry, a conversation according to Christ."

Lastly, submission to the law of sacrifice will shew itself in increased and ever-increasing charity to our fellow-men. Remember, brethren, on what it is that this law is based; remember what is the ground on which St. Paul exhorts us to the fulfilment of it, and you will see at once that enlarged and active love to our neighbour, a willingness to forego our own pleasure and profit for His sake, and a desire to free ourselves from that selfishness which would restrict all our power and means to the furtherance of our own advancement, must necessarily be the result of taking that law for your rule of life. It is by the *mercies of God* that St. Paul appeals to you to accept and fulfil the law of sacrifice. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It is the mercies of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ,—in the great mystery of the Incarna-

Digitized by Google

tion, in the fact that "God was manifest in the flesh," in His life of deepest humiliation, in His death of ignominy and suffering, in the total surrender and obedience of His whole pure and sinless Being to His Father, that we find the ground on which all sacrifice must rest. Christ, brethren, has left us an example that we should walk in His steps. He, by one act of transcendent love and mercy, has united us unto Himself, made us all members of His Body, sharers in all the gifts and privileges which He alone as the Son of God could obtain for us, and so has united us unto each other by one common bond of love and sympathy. If, then, the mercies of God in Christ have ever touched you as regards yourself; if they have ever awakened in you a desire to give yourself to Christ, who has given Himself for you; oh, remember that these mercies are not for you alone; that Christ offered Himself up not for any one set or class of people, but for the sins of the whole world; for the poor, for the ignorant, the outcast, as well as the respectable and the rich or the learned. Remember that His love enclosed all men in its embrace, and hence learn to extend your sympathies, to deepen your charity for your fellow-men. Learn that no life can be an offering acceptable to God, that does not include in it acts of sacrifice to the welfare and good of those around us. God has so willed it that we should all, throughout our life, and in whatever station we may be placed, have the opportunity of performing such acts. The

Digitized by Google

whole of society is so arranged by God's providence, that men live in mutual dependence upon each other, and that the very fulfilment of this law of self-sacrifice for the sake of others, leads to the well-being and happiness of the whole. Never will there cease to be amongst us those whom we may benefit by our acts of love and mercy. The poor and the ignorant, the sick and the afflicted, are ever with us, to remind us of our duty and our privilege as Christians, to minister to their wants, by the aid of our time, our labour, our substance, and our prayers: "To do good and to *distribute*, forget not; for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased."

Such, brethren, are some of the effects which a conviction of the duty of self-sacrifice to God will produce. It will give point and aim to every act and purpose of your lives. It will exert a purifying and renewing influence upon your hearts: it will shew you the bane and misery of selfishness, and lead you to be more liberal, more charitable, more loving to your fellow-men. But who, it may be said, is sufficient for these things? who will dare to propose to himself a rule of life which demands such an entire giving up and sacrifice of self? which requires the surrender of so much that seems pleasant in our eyes?

My brethren, remember once more, it is by the mercies of God that you are exhorted to this higher life. It is because you have been made partakers of those mercies, that you are deemed worthy and

Digitized by Google

capable of aspiring to it. It is as baptized Christians that I address you, as those to whom the new life of the spirit has been imparted, however little you may have cherished it; as those who have been made members of Christ, as those in whom the Holy Spirit is dwelling, calling you to a life of sacrifice, and strengthening you against its difficulties. It is Christ in you, who is inviting you, urging you, commanding you to a brave, a true, and earnest effort. And His commandment is life; what He bids you do, He will enable you to do. The might of His own sacrifice is with you. He who gave up Himself without spot to God, will enable you to offer up yourselves an acceptable and reasonable sacrifice, to do His will, to glorify His Name.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XV.

## The Christian Passover.

ST. LUKE xxii. 15.

*"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."*

THE circumstances under which these words were spoken impart a deep interest and significance to them. The hour was well-nigh come in which the Lord Jesus, by His own free will, was to be delivered into the hands of His enemies, and separated from His chosen disciples. During the three years of His public ministry, He had admitted this little company into the closest fellowship and intimacy with Himself; and, as we may believe, had not refused to derive comfort from their self-devotion and their love. For in that our Lord was perfect Man as well as perfect God, and had taken unto Himself man's nature, body and soul, in all its reality and completeness, so did He not scorn to share those affections and emotions which form a part of that nature, that He might teach us that when controlled and directed by a pure and sinless will, they are to be helps to us in our course of trial, and to lead us up to God, at once their source and

Digitized by Google

their end. In His disciples, then, He beheld His companions in His wanderings; the sharers of His wants, and, as far as they were able to apprehend them, the willing recipients of His doctrines. And now, as the hour of separation drew near, and they were gathered together for the last time in peaceful retirement from the world, within the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, His heart yearned towards them, and the full tenderness of His affection found expression in these words: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

But, my brethren, though our Lord might not have been unwilling to accept the solace of such a meeting with His confidential followers; though, with the awful prospect of suffering that lay before Him, He might have longed for this brief season of entire peacefulness, to be enjoyed amidst those who were most closely united to Him, yet may we be sure that the ardent desire here expressed bore reference to others rather than to Himself; and that what our loving Lord sought was not so much any relief or refreshment for Himself, as the comfort and support of His disciples, and through them of His Church at large. For that we may enter somewhat into the full significance of our Lord's desire, we must bear in mind that in His Divine foreknowledge He regarded His beloved disciples, not only as His companions after the flesh, but as the germ of that Church which He was about to set up; the representation of the whole Christian community which

Digitized by Google

was to be united unto Himself. Whatever advantage, then, might accrue to them from this meeting with their Lord, would pass on beyond them to those who should hereafter be admitted into the faithful company, and accordingly the desire of His heart thus uttered in behalf of His disciples, was the voice of love speaking in behalf of the whole body of the Church.

What, then, we have to enquire, was the benefit that was to result to the disciples, and through them to the Church at large, from this farewell meeting at the Paschal feast. Why should our Lord for their sakes desire with so ardent a desire to keep this Passover with them? To obtain an answer to this enquiry, we must recall to mind the true nature of the Passover, and the purpose of its institution.

The Passover, then, you will remember, was a sacrificial feast, instituted by God Himself as a perpetual memorial to His people Israel of their deliverance from the sword of the destroying angel by the sprinkled blood of lambs. It was an ordinance of ever-recurring obligation. Every year the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb—the sprinkling of its blood, and the consuming of its flesh at the hurried feast—was to remind them of that awful night when the angel smote all the first-born in Egypt, that they might be rescued from the hands of their oppressors: "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service, that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's

Digitized by Google

passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses."

Regarded, then, in this point of view, according to its primary intent, the Passover was essentially retrospective; it was a striking memorial of a great event; it led men to look back upon the signal mercies vouchsafed to their nation in time past, and, exciting their thankfulness to God for His undeserved goodness, urged them to individual heart-searching and humiliation for sin.

But the Passover was not merely retrospective; its full significance is not to be explained by a mere reference to the past. As the chosen people of Israel were a type of Christ's Church throughout their history, so we know that their rites and ordinances were shadows of good things to come. And accordingly the Passover sacrifice had its typical signification, like all the other sacrifices. It was prospective as well as retrospective. It was suggestive of what was to come, as well as commemorative of what had happened. It pointed forward to a deliverance from death far more terrible than that from which the bodies of the Israelites were rescued, even to a deliverance of the soul from death; to the overthrow of an enemy more powerful than Pharaoh and all his host, even Satan and his evil angels; to freedom from a servitude far more grievous than that of Egypt, even the bondage of sin. And as with benefits to be derived, so also with the means by

Digitized by Google

which they were to be effected. The lamb without blemish pointed to the pure and sinless Jesus, the true Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. The slaying of the lamb was no less significant of our Lord's atoning sufferings and death; and the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts of the dwellings of the covenanted people of God betokened the imputation of the merits of the great surety whereby Christians are delivered from the penalty of guilt.

The Passover, then, in its typical and prospective signification, excited and kept alive the hope of redemption. While as a memorial it led the great mass to reflect with thankfulness on their past temporal mercies, in its more hidden nature, as a type, it stimulated the more earnest-minded — those who could feel the power and misery of inward guilt— to long and look for a spiritual deliverance.

And now, having recalled to mind the true nature and intent of the Passover, according to its original institution, let us consider it for a moment in relation to the circumstances under which it is brought before us in the text: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." On that very night, when the Lord and His Apostles were gathered together around the Paschal meal, a wondrous change was taking place in the Divine economy, in God's dealing with men. Hitherto He had spoken to them in type and shadow, and taught them to long for better things; now the hour was

Digitized by Google

at hand in which He would speak to them by Divine realities, and would satisfy the most eager cravings of their hearts. The old dispensation was at an end, the new dispensation was coming in. The shadows and types were gone, for the substance was come. The true Paschal Lamb stood before them ready to be offered up. He of whom prophecy had spoken as the victim that should bear our sins, and make an offering of His soul for them, was in the midst of His disciples, ready to offer Himself for them, and give Himself to them. Jesus Christ, my brethren, was on the eve of His crucifixion, whereby He was to make that sacrifice of Himself, of which all others had been the type. His Blood was to be poured out, that "blood of sprinkling," whereby a sinful world was to obtain redemption and remission of sins. Why, then, should our Lord have celebrated the Passover, when its purpose seemed at an end, and the value and significance as a type to be lost in the brightness of the reality? Surely it was the very fact that the Passover had answered the purpose of its institution, and was now come to an end, that made our Lord desire to celebrate it for the last time; and that for this reason, that He might give men another and a more real Passover in its place. "After exhibiting the shadow, (it has been said,) it was proper for Him to bring in the truth also upon the Table." Now that the typical Passover was fulfilled, the Lord would substitute in its place the true Sacrament of the Passover. As the

Digitized by Google

deliverance in Egypt had found its antitype in Christ's atoning sacrifice, so did our Lord desire that the Passover, too, should find its fulfilment: that as to the Jews it had been the great source of thankfulness and comfort, speaking to them of God's mercies in times past, and affording them confidence and hope for the future; so, now that all men were to be the objects of a far higher mercy, even of redemption by the Blood of Christ, He desired to change and exalt it into an ordinance which should be a real memorial and representation of the all-sufficient sacrifice of the Cross, and the means of conveying to mankind all the benefits of His Passion.

In the Institution, then, of the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, we learn the true explanation of our Lord's desire to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. In His deep love and compassion for them and His whole Church, He desired, even on this the very eve of His Passion, to provide for their wants, to supply them with "the mysteries of consolation," to make His sacrifice available to them even before He had suffered, to offer Himself up, and to give Himself to them sacramentally and really even when yet amongst them. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My Body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,"

Digitized by Google

adding, according to St. Luke, "This do in remembrance of Me."

Thus did our Lord, in this as in other instances, act in accordance with what He had declared to be the purpose of His mission, namely, that His object was not the destruction but the fulfilment of the Law. He would not destroy the Mosaic ordinance, but He would elevate it into a rite of real and substantial efficacy; He would lead men on from the type, to seek their true consolation and strength in the antitype.

Let us remember, then, that though the Jewish Passover is at an end, the true Christian Passover is ever with us; that the celebration begun by our Lord in the great chamber at Jerusalem, has never ceased from that time till now. His command was unlimited by time or place; and throughout the whole Church, scattered as her various members are in various parts of the earth, wherever and whenever that celebration has taken place in accordance with the terms and directions of our Lord's Institution, His words have found their fulfilment, and the benefits of His Sacrament have not failed. Above all, let us learn from the words of the text to dwell more earnestly and reverently on the nature and blessedness of this legacy of love. For if to impart this gift to His Church was the object of His ardent desire, so that He could say, "with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," surely it could have been no ordinary gift,—surely it

Digitized by Google

could have been no bare memorial of His approaching death, which He longed so earnestly to bestow. No, brethren, it is only when we endeavour in humble faith to ponder over the fulness and depth of this mystery, as revealed to us in Scripture, and interpreted by the voice of Catholic antiquity; only when we have reflected upon it in all the various aspects in which it presents itself to us; and, *above all,* sought to realize its benefits by our own personal experience, then only do we seem to appreciate that longing desire which found expression in the words of the text. For if, indeed, this precious gift was to be an ordinance of so great power and efficacy, that by it the one all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, that sacrifice on which all our hopes of redemption and forgiveness depend, was to be ever commemorated and represented on earth, even as it is being continually presented by Christ Himself as He sits at the right hand of the Father; if it was to be the special means by which the all-prevailing intercession of the Son was to be put in action in behalf of the wants of individuals or of the Church at large; if it was to be the central act of worship; or still further, if it was to be the special means by which the virtue of the Incarnation should be conveyed to our whole nature; if in and through this Blessed Sacrament the Lord Jesus would impart to us the life-giving influence of His sinless humanity, and in His exceeding love and tenderness would come to us to be received into our heart of hearts, as our only

Digitized by Google

source of life and strength; if, brethren, the Blessed Sacrament was to be offered to us as a gift of such incalculable value, then may we understand how that love, which did not shrink from the agony of the Cross in our behalf, would long to bestow it upon the Church. Then we seem to find an adequate cause for that deep yearning of His heart towards the disciples, and to see in it a signal instance of that love, which was straitened until it had accomplished all that would suffice for their needs.

But, my brethren, if Jesus Christ, in the fulness of His love, has desired so earnestly to bestow upon us this gift,—with a desire so great that it overpowered all thought for Himself, even when all the sufferings of His agony and death were crowding round Him,—if He has thus desired to meet us in this Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and to come to us in all the tenderness of that love which urged Him to the first celebration of that wondrous mystery; then, brethren, what shall be said of us poor sinners, who have never known any comfort, have never dared to look up with hope and confidence, save in the strength of His adorable sacrifice, and in the power of His intercession? He, brethren, was on the eve of the bitterest suffering, was going forth to endure the fiercest struggles against all the malice and cruelty of the evil One, and yet His first thought was for His disciples, His first thought was for His Church at large, for you and for me; and shall we shrink back from Him? Shall He *desire* to keep this Pass-

Digitized by Google

over with us, and shall we have no longings? Shall He offer to come and dwell with us, to enter into us and abide with us, and shall we care not to entertain Him? Shall we have no wish to go out to meet Him, no anxiety to prepare and adorn the chamber of our hearts as a resting-place for Him? Oh, cold and ungrateful hearts, that cannot be moved by the love of Christ; that cannot be touched by the accents of deepest tenderness in which He cries, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you;" that refuse to come to Him when He calls them to that Heavenly food of His own Body and His Blood!

But, my brethren, if that ardent desire, which moved our Lord to the first celebration of the great Sacrament of His love, finds no response in the hearts of those who reject that Sacrament, or come to it with undisciplined hearts and affections; is it not true, also, that those who (in much real earnestness) value that highest means of grace, and know that it ought to be esteemed as their highest and most precious privilege, and acknowledge the full blessedness of the mystery therein contained; is it not true, I say, that such persons are often painfully conscious that their *desire*, the longing of their hearts, and the yearning of their affections, is cold and dull? Do they not oftentimes feel, when drawing near to what they hold to be the adorable Presence of their Lord, that their heart refuses to melt, that their affections are as it were dried up, that their power

Digitized by Google

of realizing to themselves the spiritual mysteries set before them is gone from them, and that dryness of spirit has taken the place of that burning desire with which they had hoped to seek their Lord? Brethren, I suppose there are no earnest frequenters of the Lord's Sacrament who have not at times experienced such a state of heart as this, and, in proportion to their earnestness, felt it to be to them a sore and heavy trial, and have even doubted whether they were right in drawing near. Let not such persons, however, be impatient. Let them believe that it may be the very means by which their Lord would test the strength of their faith in the reality and power of His Sacrament, by withdrawing those gracious influences by which He stirs the depths of their affections, and depriving them of that sensible sweetness by which, in His compassion, He refreshes our inmost souls. Only, brethren, let us ever be on our guard, lest some secret sin, some unchastened desire after the world, in any one of its manifold shapes, be the cause of this coldness of heart. Let us try and search our hearts, lest some evil temper, some indulgence in pride or selfishness, be setting itself up between us and our Lord, hiding Him practically from us, and so drying up the very springs of a vivid faith and an ardent love. But, above all, let us never fail to pray and long for this desire. God alone can impart it to us. His spirit alone, moving over our souls, can chase away the darkness, and give us such an insight into spiritual realities as



Digitized by Google

shall make us long for them. Let us cherish, and prize, and act up to whatever promptings from within have yet been vouchsafed to us, remembering that the more we desire this blessed Sacrament, the more it will profit us; for it is the very characteristic of this Holy Ordinance that it increases the graces we bring to it; it improves and adds to that which we possess. We must bring faith along with us, and God will increase our faith; we must come with charity, and we shall go away with more; we must come with truly penitential hearts, and to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; he shall be a better penitent when he hath eaten the Sacrifice that was slain for our sins and died in the body, that we might live in the Spirit and die no more.

God grant that by love and obedience, and reverent meditation on this most precious gift of the Sacrament, we may one and all be brought to enter the secrets of its blessedness, and, by a personal experience of its inward power and efficacy, be led to desire it with a more fervent and constant desire.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XVI.

## The Christian Passover.

ST. LUKE xxii. 15.

"*With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*"

ON Sunday last, my brethren, we meditated upon the deep significance of that yearning desire which filled the Lord's heart on the evening before His death, and found expression in the words of the text. In our enquiry as to the cause of that feeling, in connexion with the time and circumstances of its utterance, we found that though an anxious longing for the solace and refreshment of a farewell meeting with His loved disciples, may have well contributed towards that intense desire, that yet we must look deeper for an adequate explanation of it; that no mere reference to any personal gratification, however pure and consistent with our Lord's true humanity, would account for the utterance of such words. Taking, then, a wider view, we considered that the disciples to whom the words were spoken, and whose companionship was so especially dear to our Lord at that time, were regarded by Him in His divine foreknowledge, not only as the faith-

Digitized by Google

ful friends who were about to lament His loss, but as the representatives of the Church which He was establishing, and which they were to build up; as the germ of that great company for whom He was to shed His blood; as members of that body which was to be nourished by the fruits of His Passion. Our Lord's desire, then, would refer to the Church at large as well as to the disciples individually, and to some benefit which should result to both one and the other; and that benefit we found to consist in the institution of that Blessed Sacrament, whereby He desired not only to comfort and strengthen the disciples, but to apply the fruits of His Incarnation to His whole Church. Types and shadows were ready to vanish away; the offerings of the Law had lost their meaning, and the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb was no longer needed, now that the true Paschal Lamb was about to be offered. But the Lord came not "to destroy, but to fulfil the Law;" and though the Passover as a Jewish sacrificial fast commemorative of a temporal bondage, and typical of spiritual redemption, can no longer have place in the Christian dispensation; yet shall it not be destroyed, but exalted; not cast aside, but transfigured; the Lord in His tender love would give not the type, but the reality; not a mere carnal, material sacrifice, but a pure unbloody offering,—the Christian sacrifice of His Body and of His Blood. Thus, in the great and mysterious gift of His Sacrament, we found an adequate explanation of our Lord's yearning

Digitized by Google

desire to eat the Passover with His disciples before He suffered; we found that tender love and solicitude for the welfare of His Church were at the root of that earnest longing; and that the gift of His Sacrament was the expression of it in visible act.

But, my brethren, if we would enter into the full significance of this ardent longing expressed in the words of the text, we must endeavour to realize the full blessedness of that gift which resulted from it. On Sunday last I could but suggest to you that the very fact of our Lord's desiring so ardently to bestow it upon His Church, should prove to us that it can be no mere sign or memorial; and was forced to content myself with a mere enumeration of some of its most striking features. To-day I would desire to lead you to meditate on the nature of the Sacrament as a fulfilment of the Jewish Passover; and to dwell on one or two points, which should enable us to appreciate most fully the love and compassion which moved our Lord to say,—"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Now, brethren, when we consider the history of the institution of the Passover, we doubtless find that according to its primary intention, it was to serve as a standing memorial of God's goodness, in the deliverance of His people from a cruel bondage. It was to be observed as an ordinance for ever, and to be explained as the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, "Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the

Digitized by Google

Egyptians;" and in the Book of Deuteronomy it is written: "Thou shalt sacrifice the Passover, that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest out of Egypt." But as the children of Israel were a type of Christ's Church throughout their history, and as the deliverance from the temporal bondage of Egypt prefigured that far more important deliverance from the spiritual thraldom of Satan; so the Passover, which served to commemorate that temporal deliverance, was in itself a type of that Blessed Sacrament, which should serve as the abiding memorial and testimony to our spiritual freedom. The type has vanished away, and the substance has come in its place. When the Lord instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, He bestowed upon His Church, through His Apostles, the perpetual memorial of our redemption through the outpouring of His atoning Blood upon the Cross. He sets before us in visible act that which should recall most forcibly to our minds His wondrous love and compassion, and presents Himself vividly before our eyes as our Saviour and Redeemer.

But, my brethren, the Passover was no mere commemoration; it was not only a feast, at which men recalled God's mercies, but it was also a sacrifice: it is expressly called "the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover." The Lamb without blemish was the offering, the shedding of its blood was the token of its life having been given back to God; and the sprinkling its blood upon the door-posts of the dwell-

Digitized by Google

ings, was at once a commemoration and a significant type. But Christ came to teach us that the blood of animals is valueless in the sight of God; that carnal sacrifices cannot atone for sin, or reconcile man to His Maker. In virtue of their Divine appointment, they had been accepted of God, and had served to rouse all earnest, humble men to reach forth in longing desire for one who should be able to cleanse the conscience from the stain of sin, and speak peace to the troubled soul. But, He whom they sought was now come: the true Paschal Lamb, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world, stood before His disciples ready to be offered up on the Cross. That sacrifice being completed, that pure and priceless offering having been made to God, all the sacrifices of the Law ceased to have any purpose, for that to which they pointed had been revealed. In the Person of Christ, bleeding and dying for us on the Cross, we behold the one acceptable offering through which we have received atonement, redemption, reconciliation, and remission of sins. By Himself He "purged our sins," when He shed His Blood upon the Cross. "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His Blood." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In His adorable sacrifice we behold also the ground of our acceptance. For He "by His own Blood" hath entered into heaven, and standing as our representative before His Father, is continually

Digitized by Google

exercising His Mediatorial office in our behalf, pleading the great sacrifice of the Cross, and interceding for us in virtue of its efficacy and power. Thus the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb evidently finds its antitype in the one all-sufficient sacrifice of our Lord. He was the true Victim, in the application of whose merits men should find deliverance from the bondage of an evil nature; whose blood sprinkled upon the conscience, through faith, should purge it from dead works to serve the living God.

But, my brethren, we have to bear in mind that though the sacrifice of Christ was offered once for all upon the Cross, and can never be repeated, that yet it is ever being pleaded and presented by Christ Himself before His Father. St. Paul tells us that "He is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" and in the Revelation of St. John, He is represented "as a Lamb as it had been slain." Being consecrated on the Cross, He became our High Priest; and having passed into the heavens, He has borne thither the tokens of His Passion, and re-presents and offers to His Father the all-prevailing sacrifice of His death. That He is a Priest in heaven St. Paul tells us in express terms, and as there can be no other sacrifice than that which was offered on Calvary, so it follows that in exercising His Priestly office in our behalf, He offers that sacrifice to His heavenly Father.

Now, brethren, that which was done in type in the slaying of the Paschal Lamb, was done once

Digitized by Google

for all on the Cross at Calvary. But as our Lord continually offers, though He does not repeat that sacrifice in heaven, so, as He and His members are one, and His mediation gives strength and efficacy to our prayers, so does He desire that we should offer it on earth. The Paschal Lamb is no longer sacrificed, for the Lamb of God has been sacrificed on Mount Calvary; that sacrifice, unlike the legal sacrifices, admits of no repetition, "for Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." But the crucified Jesus ever liveth in heaven. He has triumphed over death; clothed in our nature, made perfect through suffering, He not only perpetually offers Himself to His Father, but in the infinity of His love He suffers us to re-present and consummate that stupendous offering here on earth. On that eventful evening, when He was present for the last time with His disciples at the Paschal meal, He made that first sacramental offering of Himself, which should ever after be continued. He took bread and wine, and blessing them, gave them to His disciples, and through them to the Church at large, saying, "this is My Body," "this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Then, brethren, even in anticipation of His Passion, He made an offering of Himself, and gave Himself really, substantially, and sacramentally unto them. Then did He in visible act "shew forth His own death," even before it had happened; bidding

Digitized by Google

us ever after "do the same in remembrance of Him." Then did He first exert that mysterious power which ever since has accompanied each faithful celebration of His Holy Sacrament; then did He first give authority to man to imitate and re-present on earth what He is for ever doing for us in heaven. "For," writes Bishop Taylor, "what Christ does in heaven, He hath commanded us to do on earth, that is, to represent His death, to commemorate His sacrifice by humble prayer and faithful record: and by faithful manifestation and joyful eucharist, to lay it before the eyes of our heavenly Father, so ministering in His Priesthood, and doing according to His commandment and example; the Church being the image of heaven, the priest the minister of Christ; the holy table being a copy of the celestial altar, and the eternal sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being always the same; it bleeds no more after the finishing of it on the cross; but it is wonderfully re-presented in heaven, and graciously re-presented here; by Christ's action there, by His commandment here. And the event of it is plainly this; that as Christ in virtue of His sacrifice on the Cross intercedes for us with the Father, so does the minister of Christ's priesthood here, that the virtue of the eternal sacrifice may be salutary and effectual to all the needs of the Church, both for things temporal and eternal." And in another place he writes to the same effect: "Whatsoever Christ did at the institution, the same He com-

Digitized by Google

manded the Church to do in remembrance and repeated rites; and Himself also does the same thing in heaven for us, making perpetual intercession for His Church, the body of His redeemed ones, by re-presenting to His Father His death and sacrifice. There He sits, a High Priest continually, and offers still the same one perfect sacrifice; that is, still re-presents it as having been once finished and consummate, in order to perpetual and never-failing events. And this also His ministers do on earth; they offer up the same sacrifice to God,—the sacrifice of the Cross—by prayers and a commemorating rite and re-presentment, according to His holy institution. As Christ is a priest in heaven for ever, and yet does not sacrifice Himself afresh, nor yet without a sacrifice could He be a Priest; but by a daily ministration and intercession, re-presents His sacrifice to God, and offers Himself as sacrificed: so does He upon earth by the ministry of His servants; He is offered to God, that is, He is by prayers and the Sacrament represented or offered up to God as sacrificed."

As, then, the Jewish Passover was an Eucharistical sacrifice, commemorative of that notable deliverance of God's people from captivity and death; so, brethren, is the Christian Passover, — the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. In and by it we make an offering and re-presentation of the one great sacrifice and oblation finished on the Cross in the sight of God, as well as in the

Digitized by Google

face of the Christian Church; keeping up a perpetual succession of those sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, until His coming again: "We do shew forth the Lord's death until He come." As the Jews beheld in the Passover Lamb the most striking memorial of God's love and care for His people, so do we in the creatures of Bread and Wine, consecrated by the power of Christ to be unto us His Body and His Blood, behold the most touching memorial of His infinite love to the whole race of mankind, the very representation in act of that atoning sacrifice; the very instrument of conveying its merits to us and to all faithful receivers within His Church, throughout all generations upon earth. Verily, brethren, herein do we behold His love; herein do we recognise His tender solicitude for sinful men; herein do we see the cause of that ardent longing which so consumed His soul on the evening before His death, when He said, "with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." On a former occasion He had looked onwards, and longed for the time when the great offering should be consummated in pain and suffering, and sinners set free from guilt. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He cried, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

But now, brethren, even when that fiery baptism was so near at hand, when the waters were ready to come over His head, and overwhelm His sacred Person in an agony of suffering and sorrow, even

Digitized by Google

then His thoughts are with sinners like ourselves; He reaches forward even then, and He longs to anticipate (for their sakes) the fruits of His Passion; He longs, brethren, not only to die for you, but to give Himself to you.

My brethren, are there any here whose consciences are burdened with the weight of sin, who are alive to its guilt, who long for forgiveness, who long for some assurance of pardon, some application of healing comfort to their souls. Let them behold in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, the Lamb of God who taketh away—who is ever taking away—the sins of the world. In the very visible action that accompanies that holy rite, in the broken bread and outpoured wine, let them behold the most touching and vivid memorials of the atoning sacrifice for sin. Let them remember to their comfort, that it is the very pledge and token to them of their Saviour's redeeming love, and of His continual, earnest desire to apply the merits of His Passion to their souls. Let them remember that it is the very assurance to them of the all-prevailing intercession of their Lord on their behalf; that it is a continual witness to the mediation of Christ, and, as such, to the very way by which they may be led back to their Father's house, from which they have strayed; the very channel through which they may receive remission and forgiveness of their sins, the very ground of hope, of pardon, and of peace.

But bear in mind, that repentance must be sincere,

Digitized by Google

faith must be undoubting and unquestioning, if you would draw forth such streams of hope and comfort from the Christian sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. Who, brethren, does not shrink from the thought of joining with impure heart or unclean hands in that glorious service, wherein we plead the adorable sacrifice of Christ; who does not acknowledge the fearful danger of thus dishonouring the Lord who has died for Him; who does not feel that to join in making a memorial of the agonizing suffering of the crucified Lord with a heart averted from Him, with a will turned against Him, is a fearful mockery, that will be visited with the severest punishment! Let us then examine ourselves, trying our hearts, and testing our repentance; that so we may come clean to the heavenly Feast. Let us reflect how many opportunities we have had of carrying out this searching enquiry during this holy season of Lent, and how many are yet in store for us, should it please God to spare us to the end of this great and holy week. How often have the strains of penitence gone up before the throne of grace in this Church; how often have we implored the Lord to have mercy upon us, to wash us throughly from our wickedness, and to cleanse us from our sin; how have we implored Him to make us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within us! God grant that our hearts as well as our lips may have uttered them; that we may have found in them the genuine expression of our penitence, and been led by them to seek to

Digitized by Google

make that penitence deeper and more sincere. God grant that as the Easter festival draws near, we may become more and more sensible of our unworthiness, and more and more impressed with the love of Christ for all true penitents. May the contemplation of His sufferings kindle our gratitude to Him; and may the thought of His glorious resurrection make our hearts burn within us to enter through the veil of His holy flesh and blood, into the holiest, into the presence-chamber of God, amidst all the glorious company of heaven; and to be allowed, through these memorials of the Lord's death, to join in their never-ceasing chant of Eucharist and Hallelujah!

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. I.

### The Testimony of Scripture and the Early Church to the Doctrine of the Real Presence.

MY brethren, every one will feel that there is a special solemnity and interest attending all that passes between ourselves and one who is dear to us in the last hours of his closing life. We strive eagerly at such moments to catch the faintest whisper which falls from his lips; the slightest wish is regarded as binding upon us; and the most trifling gift bestowed on us at such a time as a memorial of affection, is treasured up with a tender and anxious care. Such a scene is present to our minds, when we think of that hour in which our blessed Lord and His Apostles were gathered together in the upper room, to celebrate the last Passover, on the eve of His cruel death. From the very beginning of the world, and throughout His mortal life, He had loved us, and had given numberless tokens of His love; but now, when His earthly course was drawing to an end, He desired to leave us a still stronger and more constraining proof of His affection.

Digitized by Google

In that memorable night, the last before His crucifixion, the fire of His love, wherewith His whole soul was consumed, burst forth, and found expression in a most marvellous and inestimable bequest. He had already consoled His disciples with the assurance that they should not be left comfortless; He had promised the outpouring of the Comforter upon them; and had foretold that they should be strengthened with heavenly food, which He Himself, "the Living Bread Which came down from heaven," should supply. But these consoling promises were not sufficient to exhaust His love. With desire He had desired to eat this the last Passover with them before He died, in order that He might, even during His life, fulfil His promise; "and He took bread, and blessed it, and when He had given thanks, He said, Take, eat, this is My Body; do this in remembrance of Me; and He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Do this as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me." Thus did the Only-begotten of the Father not only condescend for our sakes to humble Himself to the level of our nature and to be made in the likeness of man; but, that we might have the strongest proof of His enduring love, in spite of His withdrawal from us, He humbled Himself still further, and in the bestowal of His Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, willed to become the food and support of our souls.



Digitized by Google

My brethren, when we allow our thoughts to dwell on this precious bequest, whether in connexion with the special circumstances of its bestowal, or still more in connexion with the results which flow from it, we recognise at once its vast importance, and are not surprised to find that in every age of the Church it has been the subject of all others which has most closely engaged the thought, and most powerfully moved the affections of holy men and women. For it not only attracts all devout and tender hearts, by its association with those events in the history of our Lord's earthly course, which most excite our gratitude and love; but when viewed in its proper relation to the whole scheme of redemption whereby God has been pleased to repair the ruin of Adam's Fall, it assumes an importance which can only be measured by the vastness of the blessings it bestows: the blessing of an enduring union with Him, Who, as the Mediator between God and man, is source of all strength and holiness: the blessing of His purifying and quickening presence within the soul: the blessing of being made partaker of a principle of life whereby body and soul shall be drawn closer and closer to God in this world, and be made capable of resurrection to eternal life in the world to come.

I ask you then, my brethren, to follow me on this and the ensuing Thursday evenings during Lent, whilst I endeavour, by the blessing of God, to set before you the Church's teaching on this most momentous subject. I cannot but feel, that although every reflecting and serious-minded person recognises

Digitized by Google

its importance and solemnity, there are but very few who have any definite conception of the truths involved in it, or any clear apprehension of what the Church would bid them believe concerning it. Doubtless great harm and grievous error have been the result of a too curious prying into the mystery which must ever surround this subject: and in the attempt to explain the manner and the mode in which God sees fit to work, and to reconcile that which is purely spiritual and beyond the reach of our finite faculties, with the laws of the material creation, men have fallen into endless perplexities and contradictions. But the danger in these days is of another kind. The tendency is to undervalue this and every other outward ordinance of the Church; to be content with a general recognition of its claim to our submission, without any careful inquiry into its real scope and meaning, or any endeavour to make ourselves acquainted with what the Church of which we are members bids us believe. And hence have arisen numberless misconceptions, and the most erroneous and insufficient views, upon this the most important of all our Christian blessings. I would desire, therefore, by setting before you what may be gathered from the teaching of Scripture, from the writings of the early Fathers, and from our own formularies, to shew what we are called upon by the voice of Scripture, by the Church Catholic in the purest ages, and by our own branch of that Church, to believe on this subject; and I pray

Digitized by Google

God, that we may enter upon it with such reverence and devotion, with hearts so prepared by faith and love, that we may gain a clearer insight into the marvellous mystery of God's goodness and loving-kindness, revealed to us in this Holy Eucharist.

Now to a devout and reverent mind, anxious to appreciate to the utmost his gifts and privileges as a Christian, the first question that will suggest itself on reflecting on the Blessed Sacrament will be this: What constitutes the peculiar value and blessedness of this Sacrament? Why, in all ages of the Church, but more especially in the earliest times, when there were no doubts or disputes on this subject, do we find this ordinance held in such great honour, and forming so essential a part of Christian worship? Why is it that a daily celebration was the rule amongst the early Christians, so that we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "that they continued daily in the temple with one accord, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart?" Why did they brave persecution and death itself, and conceal their altars in the hidden caves of the earth, rather than forego the celebration of their Sacrament? Why did they regard it as so awful and mysterious, that they dared not suffer the unbaptized to be present, and carefully shielded it from the eyes of the profane? Why is it that whilst the great fact, and the all-important words of the Institution, are repeated with an awful oneness in those of the Evangelists and St. Paul,

Digitized by Google

there is so little committed to writing on this subject in the different Epistles? The answer is, that in those days the words by which our Lord instituted and ordained this Sacrament, were understood according to their plain, natural, and grammatical sense: and those who received them in that sense, could not but perceive their deep and awful significance, and the great dignity and preciousness they imparted to the Sacrament to which they referred. Whilst, therefore, they dared not through any personal fear forego the priceless blessing it held out to them, they were restrained by feelings of reverence from exposing so great and holy a thing to the gaze of the profane; or even to speak or to wish concerning it otherwise than with a studied reserve; and hence we may account for comparative silence on this subject in the Epistles.

Now, the Apostles in forming their belief upon this subject, having been taught by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to understand the Scriptures, would doubtless recall to mind that mysterious discourse of our blessed Lord, recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in which He contrasts the heavenly and life-giving food which He should give, with the perishable food which the Jews had eaten in the wilderness.

From this chapter, then, and the words of Institution, together with St. Paul's comments in his Epistle to the Corinthians, we may gather what the doctrine of the Apostolic Church must have been, so far as

Digitized by Google

it is revealed to us in Scripture. In the sixth chapter of St. John, where our Lord is discoursing by anticipation on that great gift which He was about to bestow on His Church, He says, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." And again: "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And now look to the words of Institution, and you will see that they fulfil and apply in act and deed, that which these words had foretold.—"And He took bread, and brake it, and said, Take, eat, this," viz., this bread, "is My Body; and He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for *this* is My Blood of the New Testament." And then, looking on to St. Paul's comment upon this, observe how he expands and applies our Lord's words in strict accordance with their literal meaning. Our Lord says, "This is My Body;" St. Paul, "Is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?" Our Lord says, "This is My Blood;" St. Paul, "Is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?" But in order to be a communion of it, there must be that of which it is the communion. We cannot participate in, or partake of, still less can we be united, (as the word communion implies in the original,) to what does not exist.

Without doubt, then, we may assert that the Pre-

Digitized by Google

sence of Christ was the great cardinal truth on which the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, as held in Apostolic times, was based. At each celebration they did indeed make the most touching memorial of the Lord's death and passion, they did most truly and effectually revive the recollection of all He had suffered for them; but they were conscious of a much higher value attaching to this Sacrament than could belong to any mere bare sign or figurative representation,—they beheld in the consecrated elements, not the memorial of an absent, but the pledge of a present Saviour. And so, when we examine the writings of the earliest bishops and doctors of the Church, we find it assumed as the received doctrine on this subject, handed down from Apostolic times, that Christ through His Manhood, does in a real though heavenly manner, proper to a Sacrament, bestow His Presence upon us in the Holy Eucharist: that the very Body and Flesh that was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified, dead, and buried, is present in the Sacrament, though not in the same manner: that, whereas He is present naturally and locally in heaven, so that St. Stephen could see him standing in bodily form and presence at the right hand of God; He is present equally, really, and in His true nature of God and man in the Sacrament, but in manner which surpasses our powers of comprehension, because it is spiritual and heavenly. Nor will this mystery appear inconsistent with what we might deduce from

Digitized by Google

the consideration of our Lord's nature; for we have to remember that the Body of Christ, though made and fashioned like unto ours in all the completeness of our humanity, was yet, through its union with the Godhead, from which it never could be separated, invested with perfections and powers far surpassing that of ordinary men; and that, after His resurrection, when His body was glorified, it was in a far higher degree freed from the restraints and conditions of our mortal nature. And so, marvellous as it must have seemed to the Apostles and early Christians that He should thus have spoken of giving to them His Body as their food in the Blessed Sacrament, they would remember that it was the selfsame Body which they knew to have walked on the sea, and to have been transfigured on the mountain; the selfsame Body that had emerged from the unopened tomb, and entered into their assembly when the doors were shut; that it was, as St. Chrysostom says, "The Body of the supreme God, which had held intercourse with the Divine Nature; the Body through which we are and live, by which the gates of death have been destroyed, and the bars of heaven been opened."

Apart, then, from the claim upon our faith, which this truth of the heavenly and supernatural presence asserts, because Christ affirms it, we can see that it is entirely consistent with the capacities of the Body of Christ. "For His very human Body received great accessions from the fellowship and one-

Digitized by Google

ness which it had with the Word. For instead of being mortal, it became immortal; and instead of being carnal, it became spiritual; and whereas it was born of the earth, it passed through the gates of heaven." And so another Father writes, (St. Ambrose): "In that Sacrament Christ is, because it is Christ's Body; it is not, therefore, bodily food, but spiritual." Whence also, the Apostle says of its type: "Our Fathers ate a spiritual food, and drank a spiritual drink, for the Body of God is a spiritual Body; the Body of Christ is Body of a Divine Spirit, for Christ is a Spirit."

That the doctrine of Christ's Presence in His human and divine natures in the blessed Sacrament, was held most firmly by the early Church, is also proved by the fact that, in their controversies with the heretics, this very doctrine, as being unquestioned and undisputed, was used as an argument against them. In the middle of the fifth century two heresies, the Nestorian and the Eutychian, had called in question the Church's doctrine on our Lord's Incarnation; the one striving to separate the Divine and human natures, and denying that the Body of our Lord was united to the Godhead, or that God and Man, in the words of the Creed, are one Christ; the other confounding the two natures together, and so leading to the belief that our Lord was not really God or really man, but some third Being sprung from this confusion. The defenders of the faith, therefore, were compelled to direct their espe-

Digitized by Google

cial attention to the refutation of these heresies; and the great argument by which they met them, and on which they most relied, was the universally admitted doctrine of the Church respecting the Holy Eucharist. The answer to the Nestorians who strove to separate the two Natures, was the admitted fact that Christ's Body is not only bestowed in the Sacrament, but that it is the principle of life, as being united to the Divine Nature[a]. The answer to the Eutychians, who confounded together the two natures, was that it was "so notorious as to be witnessed by the very tongues of children, that in the Sacrament of the Holy Communion there is the truth of Christ's Body and Blood," i.e. of His human nature. Thus St. Cyril and St. Leo, the two great champions of the faith in those days, never seem to have doubted for an instant that this doctrine of the true, real, substantial, though spiritual, presence of Christ in the Sacrament, was the admitted and unquestioned belief of all Christians. "Let any man explain to us," writes St. Cyril, "and go on to teach us what is the efficacy of the mystical Eucharist. Why is it that we receive it? Does it not cause Christ to dwell in us even bodily, by the *partaking and communion with His sacred Flesh?* No doubt of it. For St. Paul writes, that 'the Gentiles had become one body, and partakers and fel-

[a] In the words of St. Cyril, "That the thing set forth on the hallowed tables of the Church is not the nature of Deity, but the very Body of the Word, Who was born of the Father."

Digitized by Google

low-heirs with Christ;' now in what way were they set forth as one body? Because they were thought worthy to be partakers of the mystical Eucharist, they became one body with Him, even as did each one of the Apostles."

To any one then who is able to consider this subject, and to examine the writings of those bishops and teachers of the early Church who are held in special reverence by our own Church in England, it will be abundantly clear that they held and taught in all its fulness, the great doctrine of the true, real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. But, whilst we cling to this doctrine as our inalienable heritage as members of the one Holy Catholic Church, whose teaching must always be one and the same in all ages and at all times; let us not relinquish our hold upon the equally important truth, that this Blessed Presence comes to us not in the order of nature but of grace. Christ's manhood is the appointed means through which He communicates His life and strength to us, and repairs the ruin of our fallen nature; and the Blessed Sacrament is the channel through which that manhood is conveyed to us. But it comes to us not in a carnal and physical manner, to operate as a charm upon our bodies, but in a heavenly and spiritual manner, in a manner suitable to a Sacrament, through which it is conveyed to act upon our souls, and to be united to our spiritual being; so that in very truth

Digitized by Google

we thereby "dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us."

Let us then, each time we draw near to that Blessed Sacrament, lift up our hearts, that with the eye of faith we may behold Him, whom we love more than any earthly friend, even the Lord himself who was born of the Virgin Mary and crucified for us, coming to us in all the truth and reality of His two-fold nature—God and man, to become the food and sustenance of our souls. Who can measure the infinite vastness of that love which not only moved Him to be born and to die for us, but also day by day to revisit us in the Blessed Sacrament, and under the veils of simple bread and wine to bestow Himself wholly upon us? What more can we do than strive most earnestly to become less and less unworthy of so august a presence, and be able at each recurring celebration to realize successfully by faith the preciousness and awfulness of the gift imparted to us? Pray we then, in the words of a holy man of old, "Out of the abundance of Thine infinite majesty, O Lord, I beseech Thee to heal my sickness, to wash out the stains of my sin, to lighten my darkness, to enrich my poverty, and to clothe my nakedness, that I may receive the bread of Angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with such reverence and fear, such contrition and love, such faith and purity, such devotion and humility as is expedient for the welfare of my soul. Grant me, I beseech Thee, to

Digitized by Google

receive not only the Sacrament and sign of the Lord's Body and Blood, but also the virtue of the Sacrament. O most merciful God, grant me so to receive the Body of Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, which He took of the Virgin Mary, that I may be incorporated in His mystical Body, and ever reckoned among His members. And grant, O most loving Father, that Him whom I now receive under a veil, I may at length *behold* with open face, even Thy beloved Son, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth ever one God, world without end."

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. II.

### The Testimony of the Prayer-book to the Doctrine of the Real Presence.

I BEGAN, on Thursday last, by pointing out to you that the great and peculiar blessedness of the Holy Eucharist, and the special honour in which it has ever been held since its institution, are based upon a deep conviction of the truth and reality of our Lord's Presence in that Sacrament. We found that the words of Scripture, as received and interpreted by the united voice of the ancient Church, have ever been held to teach, that as Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist to be one chief means by which the benefits acquired for the whole human race by His taking our flesh, are to be extended and applied to each individual soul; so He also ordained that His own body, which He had taken of the Virgin Mary, which had suffered, died, risen, and ascended into heaven, should be present in that Sacrament in an heavenly and spiritual manner, suitable to an heavenly and spiritual body, to render it efficacious to each faithful recipient: and further,

Digitized by Google

as following from this, that the Eucharist is not the sign or memorial of an absent, but the very bestowal of a present Saviour, so that those who partake of it, receive not merely the figure or shadow of Christ's Body, but the reality itself: and that as Christ's divine and human natures are inseparably united, so they receive in the Eucharist, not only the Flesh and Blood of Christ, but Christ Himself both God and man.

I proceed now to shew that the Church of England, to whom by our baptism we owe a dutiful and loving obedience, claims her right, as a branch of the one Holy Catholic Church, to teach this doctrine to her members, and that to that end she has embodied it in her formularies. The Prayer-book, with its Catechism, its creeds, its prayers, and its Articles, is the voice of the Church, and the exponent of her teaching; and as all and each of these formularies are known to have been drawn up with scrupulous care, and to have been submitted at different times to the jealous scrutiny of her enemies, as well as to the careful revision of her friends, we may be sure that the statements therein contained are the deliberate expression of her belief, and that the language employed in her prayers and devotions has not been used without a set purpose and a definite meaning.

Naturally, then, we first turn to the Catechism, as containing the simplest and the most direct teaching of the Church, on the truths and doctrines which she

Digitized by Google

deems necessary for every one of her members to hold. And seeing that what we learn in our childhood sinks more deeply and takes firmer root than in after years, we may be sure that nothing would be there inserted which is not deemed essential to the Christian Faith. Now the latter part of the Catechism treats exclusively of the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. First, it speaks of the nature of Sacraments generally, and then applies what has been said to each of the two Sacraments in particular. There are two parts, it says, in a Sacrament, "an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace."

Applying this to the Sacrament of Baptism, it points to the water as the outward sign, and declares an inward change of condition, termed "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," to be the inward spiritual grace of that Sacrament.

Two questions, you will observe, are proposed and answered in reference to this Sacrament; but, when we come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we find three instead of two. First, what is the outward part or sign? to which we have the obvious answer, the "Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received." But here the correspondence between the two sets of questions ceases; for, following upon this, the question is not, as in the case of Baptism, "what is the inward and spiritual grace?" but, "what is the inward part or thing signified?" and the answer to this does not point

Digitized by Google

to any inward change, but declares it to be the Body and Blood of Christ which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. And then follows a third question, corresponding with the enquiry as to the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, viz., "What are the benefits whereof we are partakers in the Holy Communion?" to which the answer is returned, "The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine."

Thus you observe that, whereas we are taught that the inward part of Baptism is the grace of Baptism, i.e. the new birth of the spirit within us, we are taught that the inward part of the Lord's Supper is not merely a grace, not merely the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, but the Body and Blood of Christ.

In each Sacrament we do indeed receive the grace of the Sacrament, that is, we are made partakers of the special benefits which each is intended to bestow upon our inward being. But whereas in Baptism those benefits simply accompany and follow upon the act of baptizing in the name of the Holy Trinity; in the Holy Communion they come to us through the right reception of the inward part or thing signified, i.e. the Body and Blood of Christ.

Such is the teaching of our Church to her youthful members, before they are admitted to their first Communion. As a fitting preparation for the intelligent use of her Communion Office, and still



Digitized by Google

more as a security for the due appreciation of the great dignity of the Holy Eucharist, of which they are about to partake, their attention is pointedly directed to the reality and blessedness of the gift therein bestowed. With this truth firmly fixed in their minds, they draw near for the first time to the Holy Communion, and are called upon to join in the prayers and devotion with which the Church celebrates that mystery. On taking part in that office, they find themselves at the very outset reminded of the great truth which the Catechism had taught them. For in the exhortations both before and during the Celebration they hear it declared that Christ has not only died for them, but that He is also "their spiritual food and sustenance" in the Holy Sacrament, and that if we come in faith and penitence we "spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood; we dwell in Christ and Christ in us: we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." The great truth is brought out and dwelt upon, that they are coming to receive a gift; something, indeed, they must bring with them, without which the Sacrament cannot profit them: they must bring a true penitent heart and a lively faith.

But these dispositions in themselves, however necessary, cannot impart to them the blessing of the Sacrament. Faith and penitence cannot of themselves reach up to heaven and draw down Christ into the soul, except in the way which He has ordained, namely, by humbly and pas-

Digitized by Google

sively *receiving* Him as He gives Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament. And this truth is again enforced in the prayer immediately before the consecration, in which we pray, "Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of Thy dear Son, and to drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."

The cleansing of our bodies and souls from the stains of sin and the defilements of our evil nature, is not spoken of as being wrought in a general way by faith in the efficacy of the precious Blood of Christ shed upon the Cross, but by actual receiving of His Body and Blood in the Sacrament. We pray that we "may *so* eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean."

And now, having been duly prepared for the reception of this, the inward gift of the Sacrament, we come to the act of consecration, by which the outward elements are sanctified, and made the instruments for conveying that inward gift to us. Without this act of consecration by the Church's duly-commissioned priests, there can be no celebration of the Sacrament. Our own Church, in accordance with the belief of the whole Catholic Church throughout the world, regards this act as the essential characteristic of the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord's own words, when He celebrated it for

Digitized by Google

the first time with His Apostles, declare this truth; for He did not speak of bread at large, or wine in general, as He had of the element of water in the case of Baptism, but of *this*, i.e. of that which was consecrated or set apart. It was the bread which He had blessed, over which He had given thanks, and which He had broken, and the cup over which He had given thanks, which were declared to be His Body and His Blood.

So, also, St. Paul bears witness to this act, as characteristic of the Eucharist, when he says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"

And that which our Lord did Himself, He commissioned His Apostles and their successors to do after Him: "This do in remembrance of Me." And accordingly in the writings of the earliest Fathers, "It is the food which is sanctified by the word of prayer," which is spoken of as "no longer common bread and common drink," but "the Flesh and Blood of the Incarnate Jesus[a]." "The bread from the earth," writes another, "having received the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but Eucharist, consisting of two things, an earthly and a heavenly[b]."

The importance, then, that was attached to the act of consecration, and the fact that it was ex-

[a] Justin Martyr, Apol. i. 66. [b] Iren., iv. 18. 5.

Digitized by Google

clusively confined to those duly admitted to the Priesthood in the early Church, coupled with the fact that our Church has adopted the same rule, and imposes the same restrictions, is the strongest proof of her belief in the efficacy of this act, and in the power of our Lord's words to make the bread and wine to be that which He wills them to be, His Body and His Blood.

And so in the Prayer of Consecration, whilst the elements as yet unconsecrated are spoken of as God's creatures, of bread and wine, the priest is to pray that through receiving them according to our Lord Jesus Christ's holy institution, i.e. when consecrated, we may be partakers of Christ's blessed Body and Blood.

My brethren, the devout communicant who has proceeded so far in the service, and understood the force and meaning of all that has been said and done, will now feel the need of that prayer, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." He will indeed adore with loving and unquestioning faith the great mystery set before him, the mystery of the real, true though invisible and supernatural Presence of His Lord, under the veils of the consecrated bread and wine. But he will pray that his faith may be more vivid, that shutting out the sight of all that is earthly and material, he may be able with the spiritual eye to apprehend not only the awfulness and majesty, but also the exceeding love and compassion, of Him who thus stoops from heaven to

Digitized by Google

become the guest of his soul. And these inward aspirations of the heart are directly furthered by the words of Benediction, with which the Church delivers the great and awful gift to each communicant. Our Lord had said, "whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day;" and accordingly, from the very earliest times the Church, in administering the Sacrament, has used a form of blessing based on these words: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee," or "the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul to eternal life." It is no mere general prayer that Christ, as He is in heaven at the right hand of God, may guard our bodies and souls, for we have no warrant for believing that His Body as it is in heaven has any direct influence upon us; but the words refer to His Body as it is present in the Sacrament, "the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ present under the form of bread, which has been consecrated by His words of power, 'this is My Body,' preserve now, henceforth and for ever your body and soul unto everlasting life."

The most ancient liturgies known bear testimony to the use of such words of benediction, beginning with "the Body of Christ," "the Blood of Christ," in delivering the Sacrament: and so strongly were they felt to be a witness to the doctrine of the real, true objective Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, that in that unhappy period of our Church's history, when

Digitized by Google

the lowest views of the Sacrament, as a mere bare commemorative rite, prevailed amongst those who undertook to remodel her formularies, these very words were cast out, and the clause—which now, merely as an addition, fitly reminds us that the Sacrament is a memorial as well as a Communion—was substituted in their place. But this was felt to be so opposed to the use of the whole Catholic Church as handed down from the earliest and purest times, that shortly afterwards, when the Prayer-book was arranged nearly in the form in which we have it now, the words of the ancient Church were again restored to their proper place. And by thus re-inserting the words, which had been struck out because they expressed the Presence of our Lord's Body and Blood in the consecrated elements, our Church in a marked and decided manner re-affirmed her belief in that important truth. And now, having assured us of the greatness of the gift that has been bestowed on us in Holy Communion, in the final Prayer of Thanksgiving the Church teaches us to express our gratitude to God "that He has vouchsafed to feed us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ." We must indeed have faith, in order that we may be able to apprehend and to appropriate to ourselves the benefits which the great gift bestows upon us; but faith cannot bring that gift to us; Christ alone can bestow Himself upon us; but we can only

Digitized by Google

humbly and faithfully receive Him. It is He that feeds us with the heavenly food, not we who feed ourselves: we only take with thanksgiving what He in His abundant mercy bestows. Thus the Catechism and Office of Holy Communion unite in teaching us that the inward part of the Sacrament is the Presence of Christ in His twofold nature of God and man; and that this Presence is conveyed to us not through any act or operation of our own minds, but through the earthly symbols of bread and wine, consecrated by His word of power.

My brethren, there are two errors very different from each other, but equally subversive of the true nature of a Sacrament, to which this ancient Catholic belief in the Real Presence as held by our Church is opposed. The first of these errors consists in rejecting altogether the idea of any Presence of Christ in the Sacrament at all, in denying that there is any abiding force and efficacy in our Lord's own words, "This is My Body, this is My Blood:" and so lowering the Sacrament into a mere memorial of Christ's humiliation and passion, regarding it as a recollection of Christ dead, instead of as the actual bestowal of Christ living. This erroneous belief, you will observe, deprives that inward part or thing signified of its inestimable preciousness, and contradicts the teaching of the Catechism; which declares that inward part to be not any inward dispositions or aspirations of the mind how-

Digitized by Google

ever good, not any recollection of Christ's death however vivid, not any virtual indwelling of Christ in the soul, but "the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." And as this partial and imperfect view of the Sacrament explains away our Lord's words in reference to its inward part, so there is another erroneous view which equally explains away His words touching the outward and visible sign. Our Lord had said, "This is My Body, this is My Blood." But He had also said, in reference to the consecrated elements, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day that I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom; and St. Paul also had declared, "the *bread* which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?" so that our Lord and His Apostle unite in declaring that the elements of bread and wine, after consecration, continue to exist in their natural substance. But there are those who refuse to accept our Lord's words according to their plain obvious meaning, and, treating them as though they were merely figurative, have ventured to assert, and to impose as a necessary article of belief, that after the act of consecration the true substance of the elements ceases to exist, though to the senses it appears to be present. Against this error our Church protests in her twenty-eighth Article, in which she declares that "the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved

Digitized by Google

by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, and overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament." Doubtless this erroneous view facilitates the mental conception of this great mystery, but our Church has rightly held that the principle of interpreting Scripture according to its plain literal and obvious meaning, must be applied fairly to all passages alike; and therefore, whilst she holds fast to the doctrine of a Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament, because it is the only belief consistent with this principle of an obvious grammatical interpretation of our Lord's words, she rejects the doctrine which supposes the nature of bread and wine entirely to cease by consecration, because such doctrine is inconsistent with this received principle of interpretation, when applied to the words of Scripture bearing on this point.

The Church of England does not attempt to explain the mode in which God sees fit to work; she believes in the Divine omnipotence, she believes in the truth of her Lord's words. And as she would not reject the doctrine of the twofold nature of Christ as God and man in one person, because it is inexplicable by the human understanding; so she will not shrink from believing that which her Lord has declared in reference to the co-existence of the two parts of His Blessed Sacrament, because it equally transcends the limits of our finite faculties. But, accepting the doctrine in all its fulness, she leaves it in the sacred mystery

Digitized by Google

in which God has enveloped it. And, my brethren, she would that her children should do the same; that they should believe and not dispute; that they should seek by faith, and love, and purity of heart, to apprehend the blessedness, and appropriate to themselves the fruit, of this great mystery, without any prying and curious questionings as to the manner in which the wisdom and power of God work for our salvation.

"What moveth us," writes the wise and saintly Hooker, "to argue of the manner how life should come by bread; our duty being here to take what is offered, and most assuredly to rest persuaded of this, that can we but eat we are safe. When I behold with mine eyes some small and scarce-discernible grain or seed, whereof nature maketh promise that a tree shall come; and when afterwards of that tree any skilful artificer undertaketh to frame some exquisite and curious work, I look for the event. I move no question about performance, either of the one or of the other. Shall I simply credit nature in things natural? shall I in things artificial rely myself on art, never offering to make doubt, and in that which is above both art and nature refuse to believe the Author of both, except He acquaint me with His ways, and lay the secret of His skill before me? When God Himself doth speak those things, which either for height or sublimity of matter, or else for secresy of performance, we are not able to reach unto, as we may be

Digitized by Google

ignorant without danger, so can it be no disgrace to confess we are ignorant.

"Let it therefore be sufficient for me, presenting myself at the Lord's table, to know *what* I there receive from Him, without searching or inquiring of the *manner how* Christ performeth His promise; let disputes and questions, enemies to piety, abatements of true devotion, take their rest; the very letter of the word of Christ giveth plain security that those mysteries do as nails fasten us to His very Cross; that by them we draw out, as touching efficacy, force, and virtue, even the Blood of His good side; in the wounds of our Redeemer we there dip our tongues, we are dyed both within and without, our hunger is satisfied, and our thirst for ever quenched. They are things wonderful which he feeleth, great which he seeth, and unheard of which he uttereth, whose soul is possessed of this Paschal Lamb, and made joyful in the strength of this new wine. This bread hath in it more than the substance which our eyes behold: this cup, hallowed with solemn benediction, availeth to the endless life and welfare of soul and body, in that it serveth as well for a medicine to heal our infirmities and purge our sins, as for a sacrifice of thanksgiving. With touching it sanctifieth, it enlighteneth with belief, it truly conformeth us unto the image of Jesus Christ. What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not: it is enough that to me which take them they are the Body and

Digitized by Google

Blood of Christ. His promise in witness hereof sufficeth: His word He knoweth which way to accomplish. Why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, 'O my God, Thou art true; O my soul, thou art happy!'"

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. III.

### The Benefits imparted to the Faithful Receiver.

I PROPOSE this evening to consider the benefits which the Holy Eucharist is intended to impart to all faithful receivers of it. In my two former lectures, I endeavoured to set before you the doctrine of the universal Church as held by the early Fathers, and asserted in our own formularies, on the nature of the inward part or thing signified in that Sacrament; for as the benefits which flow from its reception must depend upon the nature of the gift therein bestowed, it was necessary at the outset to realise clearly to ourselves what that gift is. Holy Scripture, the liturgies and writings of the early Church, and our own Communion Office, unite in declaring it to be the real, the supernatural Presence of Christ Himself in His twofold nature of God and man, bestowed in His Flesh and Blood which are verily and indeed taken and received in the Holy Eucharist.

With this great and fundamental truth fixed in

Digitized by Google

our minds, we come to the consideration of the further question, What are the special benefits which this Sacrament is intended to convey to us? What is the part assigned to it in the Christian scheme? In what relation does it stand to the other Sacrament of Baptism?

As both these ordinances have been divinely ordained, and are of perpetual obligation, we may be sure that to each has been allotted some essential part in the great work of man's restoration; and that as there can be no confusion between the two, so neither would the one without the other have sufficed to carry into effect that work of mercy. There are, however, some important particulars in which the two Sacraments resemble each other. They were both ordained by Christ Himself: they are intended for all people alike: they are, as the Catechism says, "*generally* necessary for salvation:" moreover, they each consist of an outward and visible sign, and of an inward and spiritual grace. Speaking generally, also, as regards the purpose of their institution, they each contribute towards the same great end of restoring the privilege of intercourse between man and his Creator, which the sin of our first parents had forfeited; for they are the means of bringing each individual soul into an intimate relation with Christ, who is the one Mediator between God and man: as God, one with the Father; as Man, one with us. And so we in Him, who is in the Father, through the Sa-

Digitized by Google

craments by which He dwelleth in us. Again, they are alike in that the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, graciously condescends to take part in each, though in each His work is different; for whereas in Holy Baptism He acts directly upon the soul, bringing each separate child of Adam into close relation with the human nature of Christ, which is the medium of life to the soul; in the Holy Eucharist He graciously exerts His power to render efficacious the outward creatures of bread and wine as the instruments for bestowing the Real Presence of Christ's Flesh and Blood to be the food of His people.

The two Sacraments, then, are each means or channels by which the benefit bestowed by Christ upon the whole human race collectively, through uniting our nature to His Divine nature, is applied and made over to each individual member of that race. Now the benefit which the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord effected for mankind at large, was the restoration of that power of holding communion with God, which had been lost by Adam's sin; and so rendering it possible for a new inward principle of life to be imparted to our souls and bodies, whereby the opposite principle of corruption, which threatened to deliver us over to eternal death, should be ultimately cast out and overcome. God, we know, is the only source of life, He is life itself; and all the forms of life which we see around us, or in the natural world, however imperfect, are the faint re-

Digitized by Google

flections of that life which has existed in Him from all eternity in the perfection of an inexhaustible fulness.

But He alone, who bestowed that wondrous gift upon His creatures, can sustain it. From Him alone, whence as its only source it originated, can fresh supplies be obtained. And so it came to pass that when the golden chain by which, as it were, man, in his primeval innocence, had been united to his Creator, had been severed by sin, and the intercourse between the Supreme Mind and the minds which He had created had been cut off by Adam's transgression, then both body and soul became liable to death; that mysterious principle of life whereby our bodies and minds are enabled to perform their allotted functions, and to grow and expand until they reach a prescribed degree of maturity, became at once liable to decay; the seeds of death and corruption, the terrible consequences of sin, at once began to work; and that power of life, which had been sustained in all its freshness in man whilst in the garden of Eden, gradually yielded to the inroads of disease and corruption when he was banished from the presence of God.

"For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all men have sinned." Thus, then, as regards our bodies, they must, but for the redeeming mercy of God, have been held captive for ever by death.



Digitized by Google

But man is not made only of that which is material. Like other creatures he is endowed with a bodily organization, which, so far as we know, is essential to the completeness of his being. But, unlike the other creatures, he is endowed also with a spiritual and immaterial part. When God breathed the breath of life into him, man became a living soul. Now the life of the soul is analogous to the life of our bodies. Just as the bodily life consists in acting, moving, and performing aright, and controlling the different functions which belong to the body; so the soul's life consists in exerting its own special powers for the end and purpose for which they were bestowed. When, then, the reason, affections, the conscience, and the will, viz., the rational and spiritual part of our nature, are acting in obedience to the laws imposed by the Creator, the life of the soul is then putting forth its energy, and giving evidence of its vigour.

But just as our bodily life has been rendered incapable through sin of resisting the effects of corruption, so also has our spiritual life. The soul, in its natural, fallen condition, has become the sport and prey of passions and desires, which tend to degrade it from its position as the ruler and controller of our lesser bodily nature; and the harmony which once existed between its ends and aims and the will of its Creator ceased to exist. So that, being deprived of God's sustaining and enlightening power, it has of itself a continued tendency to fall

Digitized by Google

away farther and farther from God, and to approach nearer to that state of inward darkness and moral paralysis of all the spiritual energies, which issues in eternal separation from God the Giver of life, or, in other words, in spiritual death.

What, then, was the great and pressing need which no human aid could supply to the fallen sons of men? Surely the need of a new principle of life which should build up and restore our bodily and spiritual natures, and render them capable of resisting the hitherto overpowering influence of decay and corruption; a principle of life which should impart the germ of the Resurrection power, by which our bodies shall burst the bands of death, and find their complete redemption in reunion with the soul from which it had been parted for a season; a principle of life, too, which shall so have transformed that soul from its natural fallen state, and make it one in will and affection with its Creator; that it shall be able to rejoice in His Presence, and to derive from that unfailing source ever fresh and inexhaustible supplies of strength for its continual support.

To supply this need was the great object of that marvellous act of mercy and condescension, which the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ has disclosed. Christ put on our flesh that His Humanity, made perfect through union with the Divine nature, should be the means of transmitting anew to us the gift of life which we had lost. As the source of life

Digitized by Google

lay originally in Deity, and extended by natural derivation to Him who was the eternal Son of the Father, so were its blessed effects embodied in the Humanity of the Word made flesh, that from Him they might diffuse themselves through His brethren.

Christ, then, in our nature having died for our sins, triumphed over death, and ascended into heaven, has become the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body. But in order that, as individuals, we may derive benefit to ourselves from Him, we must be united to that Body of which He is the Head. We must each become part of that organized whole, and receive our place in its mighty arrangement.

And hence the object and necessity of Baptism. For that Sacrament incorporates us into, and makes us members of, the Body of Christ. It is the act whereby, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, the first germs of the new life are imparted to us; so that we are said to be born again of the Spirit; and henceforth, having been brought into close relation with Christ, are enabled to derive strength and nourishment from Him who is the Head of the body. The benefits obtained by Christ for the whole human race are thus brought within the reach of each separate individual. For through the working of the Holy Spirit He binds together the various parts into one organized whole: "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body;" and then as the sap flows from the root of the tree into each separate branch, so the life and strength which exist in Christ

Digitized by Google

are transmitted by appointed channels to each of His baptized members.

Through the energy of the principle of life imparted in Holy Baptism, we are enabled to take our place in the mystical Body of Christ, to be united to Him, and made a sharer in all the benefits which flow from His glorified and sinless Humanity.

But though Baptism quickens our fallen nature, dead in trespasses and sins; though it supplies that very principle of life of which we found we stood so much in need; though it unites us to the Body of Christ, it can do this but once in the life of each individual. We cannot be born twice of the Spirit, any more than we can be born twice naturally. Baptism makes us living members of Christ's Body, but it can do no more. It implants the seeds of the new life, but it can do nothing towards fostering its growth and bringing it to maturity.

Think, then, my brethren, how little would this ordinance, blessed as it is, avail for our deliverance from the power of decay and corruption, if it stood alone. Think of the many blighting influences to which, like some tender and delicate plant, that principle of new life must be exposed so long as it remains in this world of sin; think how the corrupt nature within us, with its unruly passions and undisciplined will, is sure to oppose the first motions and the most feeble energies of the new life of holiness within us; and in proportion to the success of that opposition, quenching that new life, which

Digitized by Google

once lost can never be renewed, and cutting us off from Christ as dead branches from the living tree.

Where, then, is the channel by which the streams of life may flow continually into our souls and bodies, to renew and invigorate the life given to us at Baptism? Where is the instrument by which our union with Christ may be cemented and rendered perpetual? The grace of Baptism cannot make us full-grown Christians; for we are to grow in grace during this life, and not until our final redemption from the bondage of corruption may we hope to attain to the "perfect man." The grace of Baptism cannot ensure our final perseverance, or the continuance of a living union with Christ. But that which Baptism is not intended to do for us, the Holy Eucharist does by Christ's own appointment. His life-giving Flesh is the instrument through which a continual coherence to Himself is cemented, and the medium through which the living principle implanted at Baptism extends itself.

The support and enlargement of life is the special benefit which is connected in Holy Scripture with this Sacrament. If we look to the types by which it was prefigured, we find this the prominent idea. The tree of life in the Paradise of God; the bread and wine wherewith Melchizedek met Abraham; the Paschal Lamb; or, again, the Manna, as our Lord Himself interprets it, representing Him as coming down from heaven to give life unto the world. In all these varied symbols, strength, re-

Digitized by Google

newed life, growth and refreshment, are the gifts set forth; and when our Lord in that wonderful discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John speaks by anticipation of the fruits of being partakers of the Holy Eucharist, which He was ere long to institute, He connects the gift of life with it throughout. It is of freedom from death, of life through Him, through His indwelling, and therefore of Resurrection from the dead and Life eternal of which He speaks. "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and *not die*. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall *live* for ever: and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the *life* of the world. Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have *no life* in you. Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal *life*, and I will raise him up at the last day." And again, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, he also shall *live* by Me."

The gift of life you see, as the fruit of the Sacramental partaking of His Body and Blood, is the one central idea of this discourse. By it we dwell in Christ and He in us; our union and incorporation with Him are maintained; by it we not only *shall* have, but have "eternal life," because we have Him who is the "only true God and eternal Life." By it we shall attain unto "the Resurrection unto life,"

Digitized by Google

because it is Christ's life which we have within us: and by it we shall live for ever, because we are made one with Him "who liveth for evermore." Thus does our Lord point to the Holy Eucharist, as the means by which fresh streams of life are to be continually transmitted to the soul, to invigorate and renew and augment that which was implanted in us at our Baptism; thus does He declare repeatedly and emphatically that the efficacy and preciousness of that gift are derived from His Body and Blood bestowed in that Holy Sacrament. What Baptism, then, could not do for us, because it is the Sacrament of our new birth, and cannot be repeated, the Holy Eucharist is ever present with us to effect; as from the day of our natural birth to the day of our death, food is provided for the support of our natural life; so from the moment of our spiritual birth to the time of our deliverance from the decaying influences of this mortal life, a spiritual food is supplied to sustain our fainting souls. The prayer which seems at first to relate only to our bodily wants, "give us this day our daily bread," is found to be answered in the overflowings of our Heavenly Father's goodness, by the provision which is made also for the daily supply of our spiritual needs. As truly as God's mercy follows us all the days of our life, so have we a most signal instance of that mercy in the Holy Eucharist, wherein we may be fed day by day with angels' food, and drink fresh streams of heavenly life from the fountain of life itself.

Digitized by Google

Life then, spiritual life, that inward principle by which the soul rises superior to the corruption which is at work within it, and puts forth all its energies in unison with the will of its divine Lord,—life, by which it triumphs ever more and more over evil, and grows in the likeness of Christ, that is the special benefit which becomes new through the Holy Eucharist.

But observe, my brethren, it comes to us under various aspects, and to produce various effects, according to our several needs. To those who are living as obedient and loving children of God, closely united to their Lord in an unbroken oneness of will and affection, it comes to augment the gifts of grace which have already been bestowed, and to promote the work of sanctification which has already been begun. It comes to render them more and more sensible of Christ's love for them, and so, by increasing their love for Him, to draw them more and more out of themselves, away from that selfishness, which retards in some degree the perfecting of the holiest, and to absorb them into Himself. Such is the special influence of the Holy Eucharist in those who are intimately united to Him. By the attraction of a still closer union it moulds and fashions them to His will. His love, the compelling principle of their obedience, diffuses itself throughout their whole being as an increasing power; it quickens the energies of their souls, so that they can act more freely and independently of all that is earthly, and

Digitized by Google

they are enabled in a degree to realize the Apostle's words, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

But, brethren, what shall be said of those who are conscious not only of the many infirmities which cling even to the holiest of God's saints, but of positive sins, and of direct acts of rebellion against the will of their Lord? They have learned by the grace of God to repent, and to sorrow with a godly sorrow for these signs of ingratitude and want of love; they have measured the depth and heinousness of their sin by the infinite Sacrifice required for its satisfaction; they have resolved in the strength of God's grace to put away the evil that is in them, and to turn heartily to God's service; with penitent and contrite hearts they desire to return to their father's house, and to do His will. Is there any place they will ask for such as they are at the Eucharistic Feast? Can their souls, stained and defiled by sin, become the receptacles of that Divine life which that Sacrament imparts? Can it come to them, poor penitent sinners as they are, in a way which shall heal the wounds which sin has inflicted on them?

My brethren, the same reality which makes the Blessed Sacrament an increase of sanctification to God's holy ones, makes it a ransom for the sinner. For, drawing near with a conscience cleansed by repentance, He receives the very Body which was broken, and the Blood which was shed for the remis-

Digitized by Google

sion of sins. Let but his repentance be sincere and complete, and then no sense of unworthiness need hinder his approaching. That Blessed Sacrament shall be the most efficacious means of applying to him the cleansing power of the Blood shed for him on the Cross. Life shall flow from his Lord into his soul, to heal, renew and restore. "How should he die," says one (St. Ambrose), "whose food is life? How perish, who hath a living substance? Approach to Him and be filled, because He is bread: approach to Him and drink, because He is a fountain: approach to Him and be enlightened, because He is Light: approach to Him and be freed, because where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty: approach to Him and be absolved, because He is remission of sins." Thus, too, in the prayers in our own Liturgy we are taught to pray "that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood."

And lastly, as the gift of life in the Holy Eucharist comes as an increase of sanctification to God's saints, and as a ransom to the penitent sinner, so it comes to all who are in a state of grace, as the pledge and earnest of Resurrection to life eternal. "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Each Holy Eucharist we receive in faith, serves to quicken that seed of a new life within us, which shall gradually absorb into itself all that is mortal and corrupt both in body and soul, and in

Digitized by Google

God's good time shall assert its power, by raising our bodies incorruptible and glorified, to be once more a fit tabernacle for the purified soul. Each time we draw near to that Holy Sacrament, we have the surest pledge that the temples of our bodies which are now indwelt by the Spirit of God shall put on incorruption, for we know that He who comes to us there is not dead but living; it is He who died and rose again: it is He who shewed Himself in His risen Body to His disciples: it is He who ascended in that Body, glorified and made perfect, to His heavenly throne: it is He who has Himself declared, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of Death."

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. IV.

## The Christian Sacrifice.

EVER since the Fall, whereby man rendered himself liable to eternal death, and found himself cut off from communion with God, the object of the Divine dispensations towards him has been two-fold. First, to subdue the pride of his corrupted nature, by constantly reminding him of his liability to punishment to satisfy the Divine justice; and secondly, to excite him to love and obedience by pointing out a way of deliverance provided by the Divine mercy. No sooner had man afforded the most signal instance of his ingratitude, than the promise went forth which declared how he might be cleared of the guilt of that terrible sin; and whilst he hears the sentence of his expulsion from Paradise, he is cheered with the hope of forgiveness through the aid of a promised Redeemer, Who should bruise the head of the serpent.

Now the appointed means by which man was thus to be made conscious of his relation to God as one who had lost all claim to the Divine favour, but who was yet the object of the Divine love and com-

Digitized by Google

passion, was through the institution of sacrifice. The very first act of worship we read of after the expulsion from Paradise is connected with sacrifice. When Cain and Abel seek to hold communion with their Maker, we read that they each bring an "offering unto the Lord;" and it would appear that the offering of Abel was accepted in preference to that of Cain, because those dispositions of heart which the sacrifice was intended at once to excite and to indicate had accompanied Abel's offering, whereas Cain's had been purely formal.

Again, after the second exhibition of God's justice in the well-nigh total destruction of the whole human race by the Flood, when Noah and his family seek to draw near to the Almighty Father, and to thank Him for their deliverance from the universal destruction, we read that Noah "builded an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings upon the altar."

And thus throughout the whole age of the patriarchs from Adam to Moses, although we are not able to point to any express words authoritatively enjoining the rite of sacrifice, yet it is clear that it was constantly observed in accordance with the Divine will; and when accompanied with, and prompted by, proper motives and feelings, was regarded as the fitting means by which man should hold communion with his Maker.

But when we come to the Levitical dispensation, which supplied rules and regulations for the religious

Digitized by Google

worship of the chosen people, we find the rite of sacrifice not only recognised and perpetuated, but elevated into a divine ordinance, and the regular and careful performance of it ensured by the appointment of a duly-commissioned Priesthood. Though, however, the Jews were taught that an exact compliance with the whole law of sacrifice, with all its minute ceremonial, was binding on all faithful children of Abraham, as the appointed means of sharing in the blessings of the covenant: yet it is clear they knew that those sacrifices possessed no intrinsic value, and had in themselves no virtue or efficacy to procure those blessings. The warnings and expostulations of the prophets to the Jews, especially in the later period of their history, wherein the heartless formality of their acts of worship are exposed; and their sacrifices, as "vain oblations," declared to be offensive to God on that account, testify to this. The sacrifices could only be acceptable to God, in so far as they really and truly betokened the inward sacrifice of the heart and spirit, and the craving for a deliverance from the burden and power of sin. "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart Thou wilt not despise."

In the surrender of the victim as an offering, the pious worshipper would see a plain acknowledgment of his own sin, and of the punishment which is its due; whilst, in the outpouring of the blood of the victim, he would see the shadow and type of a far

Digitized by Google

higher and more effectual deliverance to be wrought by some great one yet to come.

Now that which the inward consciousness of each Jewish worshipper, and the explicit declarations of Prophets and Psalmist taught him, with more or less distinctness, according to his spiritual apprehension as to the meaning and significance of the law of sacrifice, has been made quite clear to us, who look at it by the light of the Gospel revelation. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to remove the scruples and difficulties of the Jews who were converted to Christianity, and who, in consequence, found themselves precluded from taking any part in the Mosaic sacrifices; and it shews how needless those scruples were, because these very sacrifices which they were hankering after had all been fulfilled in the one great sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross. That was the great Sacrifice, the great Atonement, the great act of Reconciliation, whereby the debt due from man to God was cancelled, and a return to the peace of a cleansed and renewed heart made possible.

The Psalmist, speaking in the spirit of prophecy, had declared, "Burnt-offerings and sacrifice for sin hast Thou not required; then said I, Lo, I come." And St. Paul directly applies these words to Christ, telling the Jewish converts "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me."

Digitized by Google

Christ, then, in virtue of those qualities which belonged to Him as the eternal Son of God made Man, was enabled in the fulness of His love and compassion to supply in His own sinless Person a sufficient sacrifice and offering for the sins of the whole world. Surrendering Himself into the hands of wicked men, and permitting them to be instruments of shedding His Blood and slaying Him on the Cross, He made that one voluntary sacrifice of Himself which can never be repeated, and in which all the sacrifices of the old covenant have found their entire completion.

The Jewish priests stood daily ministering, and were obliged day by day to offer fresh victims, because each sacrifice was a mere type and sign of that which was to come, and the repetition was needed, in order to set continually before the people the hope of something truer and better. But Christ, "having offered one sacrifice for sins," because that sacrifice was all-sufficient and satisfied all the requirements of God's justice, "for ever sat down on the right hand of God." It were to dishonour our Blessed Lord, and to contradict the fundamental truth of His Gospel, to suppose that any other offering or act of service can be required to enhance the atoning efficacy of His sacrifice. That sacrifice has been the means of procuring for us every gift which man can need, or a loving Father can bestow; no other atoning and saving victim can be required, than that meek and spotless Lamb which



Digitized by Google

was slain on Calvary: no other blood can be ever "precious" in the sight of God, than that which flowed from the five sacred wounds in the crucified Body of His own well-beloved Son.

But, though Christ has once for all suffered Himself to be slain on the Cross, He did not complete by that act the work which He had undertaken in man's behalf. He did not merely rise again from the dead to signify His Father's acceptance of the sacrifice He had provided. As our High Priest, He had made an offering of Himself to God upon the Cross; but that offering was to be perpetual. Christ, we are told, is a Priest for ever; He is consecrated for evermore to "an unchangeable Priesthood." When, then, He rose from the dead and ascended up on high, He did not renounce that Priestly office which He had taken on Himself: He did not cease to act on man's behalf. He could never again be slain on the accursed tree, because He has conquered sin and death, and liveth for evermore. But He lives, that He may continue to exercise His Priestly office in our behalf before the throne of the Eternal Father. He lives not only to regain the bliss of heaven, but to complete the work of our salvation, by applying to us the merits of His one all-sufficient sacrifice of the Cross. He is not, like the Jewish high-priests, "entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true;" but, as their great Antitype, He has entered into heaven itself, now to "appear in the presence of God for us."

Digitized by Google

But if His Priesthood be perpetual, He must have somewhat to offer perpetually before God, in virtue of which He pleads in our behalf. And this offering can be nothing else than His own Body and Blood, which was broken and shed upon the Cross, and which He took to Himself again at His resurrection, and carried up with Him into heaven, to present in our behalf before His Father. Thus the sacrifice, though once for all offered by the shedding of blood on the Cross, is ever living and continuous through the resurrection, and is continually presented and offered before His Father by Christ Himself, as the ever-abiding memorial of His meritorious Cross and Passion; and thus His Church on earth betokens her consciousness of the present abiding and continuous efficacy of the offering He as her Head is ever making for her, crying continually to Him in her Eucharistic service, "O Lamb of God, Son of the Father," not that *tookest* away, but, "that takest away the sins of the world."

Now it being clear that Christ, as our great High Priest, is ever living in heaven to present the sacrifice of His once-crucified, but now living and glorified Body, to God, and in virtue of it intercedes with prevailing efficacy in our behalf; it becomes to us, His members, a question of surpassing interest, how we may profit by His continual mediation, and derive to ourselves the benefits of His perpetual intercession. Is it allowed us to help ourselves by any voluntary efforts of our own from

Digitized by Google

the store of blessings He has purchased for us? May we venture, by the mere aspirations of a devout and earnest mind, to look for that acceptance with God which direct sacrifice and continual mediation have made possible for us? This would be inconsistent with the mode in which Christ has seen fit to apply to us the benefits of His work of mercy. He, as our Mediator, acts on our behalf towards God; but in order that we may share in the benefits of that mediation, we must take part in those holy ordinances whereby He puts us into relation with God. And of these the Holy Eucharist is the chief, because it is the crown of public worship, the link whereby men are united to Christ, the focus in which all other Church ordinances concentrate.

And thus we have opened out to us a fresh aspect of the Holy Eucharist. It is no longer only the means by which Christ bestows Himself as food and nourishment for the souls of His people; but also the means by which He associates them in the work of His mediation, and makes them sharers in the benefits of His intercession. It is no longer only a Sacrament, by which the most precious gift of His own Body and Blood is conveyed under outward veils to the souls of the faithful; but it is also a sacrifice, wherein the Church on earth presents spiritually and supernaturally before God the perpetual offering of the Body and Blood of Christ which were sacrificed on the Cross, and which

Digitized by Google

Christ Himself ever presents naturally in heaven, as the abiding memorial of His Death and Passion.

"Thus we shew the Lord's death till He come," and in each celebration have set before us the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ. By His own appointment we perpetuate and continue that offering which our Lord made of Himself in the upper chamber. In that momentous night before His crucifixion, He, as the true Melchizedek, made an offering of Himself under the form of bread and wine; and He gave commission to His Apostles, as priests, to perpetuate that offering by an ever-recurring celebration.

Here, then, is the ordinance by which we become sharers in all the benefits which flow from our Lord's mediatorial work and intercession in heaven; because in it we become associated together with Him in offering the sacrifice, in virtue of which His work as Mediator and Intercessor is of prevailing efficacy. For as we have seen that the characteristic of the Holy Eucharist is the real though invisible presence of our Lord in that Sacrament, so we clearly perceive that that mysterious and blessed presence supplies the offering which must be acceptable to God, seeing that it is the same which Christ Himself is ever presenting in heaven. And as the meanness of the creatures of bread and wine does not hinder them, when consecrated by words of power, from being the vehicles of the inestimable gift of our Lord's unseen Presence; so neither does the

Digitized by Google

weakness of him who ministers before God as His commissioned priest, detract from the efficacy of the offering which he makes. For he stands, not to minister at the holy altar in his own name, or by any self-derived authority; he stands clothed with the authority of Christ Himself, as His representative, to be the instrument and channel through whom Christ is pleased to work. Christ speaks by his voice, and he acts by Christ's power.

Whatever degree of efficacy, then, the Church claims for her ordinances, she claims simply and solely in virtue of the power which flows from Christ, her Head, and which He is pleased for a time should dwell in earthen vessels. Her Baptism confers the gift of regeneration, because it is Christ who baptizes; Confirmation confers the gifts of the Spirit, because Christ confirms; Absolution is valid and effectual for the cleansing of the conscience, because Christ absolves; Ordination conveys its own special grace, because Christ ordains; and so consecration of the elements in the Holy Eucharist is a word of power to impart the inward gift to the outward sign, because it is Christ who consecrates; and the offering of that inward gift is real and effectual, because it is Christ who offers.

As, then, there can be no more offering of sacrifice by the shedding of blood, since that has been done once for all upon the Cross, and yet the sacrifice itself is perpetual, and continues to be offered up in heaven by Christ; so that sacrifice is perpetuated

Digitized by Google

on earth in the Holy Eucharist. *That* is the Christian sacrifice, which has taken the place of the Jewish sacrifices; that is the "pure offering" foretold by the Prophet Malachi, as about to take the place of the blood-offerings when God's Name should be great among the Gentiles.

When, then, we speak of the Christian sacrifice in the Holy Eucharist, the idea of any repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross, or of any substitution of another victim, can never enter into our thoughts. "There is no new sacrifice," says Bishop Cosin, "but the same which was once offered, and which is every day offered to God by Christ in heaven, and continueth here still on earth, by a mystical representation of it in the Eucharist. And the Church intends not to have any new propitiation or new remission of sins obtained; but to make that effectual, and in act applied to us, which was once obtained by the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. Neither is the sacrifice of the Cross, as it was once offered up there by shedding of blood, so much remembered in the Eucharist; though it be commemorated, as regard is had to the perpetual and daily offering of it by Christ now in heaven in His everlasting Priesthood."

Hear also, my brethren, on this subject, the words of Bishop J. Taylor, whose devotional works are of such high authority amongst us.

"What Christ does in heaven," he writes, in his work on the Blessed Sacrament, "He hath commanded us to do on earth; that is, to represent

Digitized by Google

His death, to commemorate His sacrifice by humble prayer and thankful record, and by faithful manifestation and joyful Eucharist to lay it before the eyes of our Heavenly Father; so ministering in His Priesthood, and doing according to His commandment and example, the Church being the image of heaven, the priest the minister of Christ; the holy table being a copy of the celestial altar, and the eternal sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being always the same; it bleeds no more after the finishing of it on the Cross; but it is wonderfully re-presented in heaven, and graciously re-presented here; by Christ's action there, by His commandment here. And the event of it is plainly this: that as Christ, in virtue of His sacrifice on the Cross, intercedes for us with the Father, so does the minister of Christ's priesthood here; that the virtue of the eternal sacrifice may be salutary and effectual to all the needs of the Church, both for things temporal and eternal."

Much confusion of thought and misapprehension on this subject would be avoided, if the distinction between the two senses in which the word "sacrifice" may be used were carefully observed; for it is obvious it may mean either the *act of slaying* a victim, or secondly, the *victim* itself which is slain. Thus we might speak of a lamb as a sacrifice, meaning a victim; but if we spoke of the sacrifice being completed, we should mean that the act of slaying the lamb was completed.

Digitized by Google

When, then, it is said that the sacrifice offered in the Holy Eucharist is the same as that offered on the Cross, it is meant that in virtue of our Lord's real presence there, the same victim is offered in a heavenly and spiritual manner, namely, Christ Himself. But if any should suppose that it was meant that the same "act of sacrificing" took place again, they would grievously misunderstand the words, and fall into great error. It is evident that such a person would be confusing the *sacrificing* of Christ, which never can be repeated, and which none but He could effect, with the perpetual offering of Christ once for all sacrificed on the Cross. The Eucharistic sacrifice, or offering, reflects back the light and glory which streams from the sacrifice of Calvary, and is only real and efficacious in so far as it is the memorial and representation of that great act of atonement. But to say that it interferes with the sufficiency of the death of Christ, would in effect be saying that our Lord could not be our Intercessor in heaven, because by His death He had become our Redeemer here on earth.

From what has been said, it will be apparent that the Holy Eucharist is not only the highest act of worship, because it unites us most intimately to Christ, and so is the one central point towards which all other acts of worship must tend; but also because it is the special act by which Christ's mediation is applied to us, and His glorious inter-

Digitized by Google

cession made available for us. For in the words of St. Chrysostom, "When the whole people stand with uplifted hands, a priestly assembly, and that awful sacrifice lies displayed, how shall we not prevail with God by our entreaties for those (for whom we pray). It is the highest and most important act of worship by which we can approach the throne of God; because, in addition to its being the communion of the most precious Body and Blood of Christ, it is also the Christian sacrifice, in which we plead on earth most efficaciously the sacrifice which is continually being offered and presented in our behalf in heaven."

My brethren, it may be that many of us have dwelt but little, if at all, on this aspect of the Holy Eucharist. We have thought of it as a Sacrament, but have neglected it as a sacrifice. If so, our loss is great; we throw away one of the greatest encouragements to prayer, and deprive ourselves of a fruitful source of most constraining motives to a holy and devoted life. For what greater encouragement to believe in the efficacy of our prayers and supplications, whether for ourselves or others, than that we are not only pleading by word of mouth Christ's atoning sacrifice, saying, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," but that we are joining in act and deed in presenting the memorial of that sacrifice in the way He Himself has commanded?

How eagerly should we avail ourselves of every opportunity of taking part in that highest act of

Digitized by Google

worship and adoration, (even though it might be right for us to forego the blessing of the priceless gift therein bestowed;) in the firm assurance that our prayers and devotions, our confessions, our acts of penitence, faith, and love, our cries for mercy and help, both for ourselves and all who claim an interest in our supplications, must be of most prevailing efficacy when offered up in union with that sacrifice which Christ Himself offers by the hands of His minister! How, too, would the constant thought that in the Holy Eucharist we see the most touching memorial of all the sufferings on Calvary, that we are in the very presence of Him, who not only endured those sufferings and bled for us, but was willing to bear the marks of His wounds, and to retain all the tokens of His humiliation, that He might have wherewithal to appear continually before God in our behalf; how would the sense of this most wondrous condescension, and compassion, and tender sympathy with the wants of His brethren, subdue our hard and selfish hearts, and bind us to Him by the more entire devotion of body and soul to His service! How far more terrible would the thought of sin be, when viewed in the light of that most expressive and significant act, whereby our Lord exhibits to us the priceless value of the ransom required for its expiation! How deep and true would be the sense of our utter unworthiness, when we realize the august presence of the sacred Victim! And

Digitized by Google

when with the eye of faith we pierce the veil, and behold the Lord offering Himself as the Lamb as it had been slain, how real and true would that prayer be to us which has become the heritage of the whole Catholic Church, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. V.

### The Means by which we Share in the Intercession of Christ.

IN my last lecture, my brethren, your attention was directed to the consideration of the Holy Eucharist, viewed in its sacrificial aspect. It was pointed out to you that that holy ordinance, besides being a Sacrament wherein, under the veils of outward and visible substances, an inward and invisible gift is bestowed upon us, is also a sacrifice, in which an offering is presented to God as a perpetual memorial of our Lord's one great atoning sacrifice on the Cross; further, that this sacrifice is real and effectual, because it is offered up in union with that which Christ is ever offering and presenting in heaven, and is the channel through which the Church on earth is enabled to share in the all-prevailing intercession, which Christ, as her Head, is ever carrying on in her behalf in the heavenly courts. For it was shewn that our Lord's mediatorial work as the Church's Intercessor was not fully entered upon until the great act of atone-

Digitized by Google

ment had been consummated on the Cross, whereby the offering was provided, whose infinite merits the great Mediator has ever since pleaded on our behalf. For having ascended up into heaven in that same body which was crucified on the tree, and consecrated by the shedding of blood, He, as our great High Priest, is ever presenting Himself before His Father, clothed in that same Body, with all the tokens and memorials of His Passion, as an offering of most prevailing efficacy, in virtue of which He never ceases to intercede for us.

Further, it was observed that that which the Church's Head is ever doing in heaven, He wills that the Church herself, being one with Him, should do on earth; and that to that end He graciously bestows His Presence in the Holy Eucharist, whereby an offering is provided which His Body, the Church, after His pattern and example, may ever present before God; and in virtue of which she may claim a part in the work of intercession which Christ, as her Head, is carrying on in heaven.

Thus the Eucharistic Sacrifice was shewn to be the chief channel of communication between heaven and earth, the golden link by which they are once more united together, and through which the Church on earth as the Body of Christ, and each individual Christian as a member of that Body, not only shares in all the benefits which flow from her Lord's intercession, but also in the high prerogative of taking part in that intercession herself.

Digitized by Google

In order, then, that we may duly appreciate the blessing which the Holy Eucharist confers upon us when regarded as a sacrifice as well as a Sacrament, let us consider, somewhat more fully than was possible in the last lecture, the nature of our Lord's intercession, and the special advantage that accrues to us from being associated with Him in so high and holy a work.

How, then, it may be asked in all reverence, does our blessed Lord intercede for us?

First, as we have already seen, by continually exhibiting before His Father His glorified and risen Body, bearing still the scars of the five sacred wounds which were inflicted upon it on the Cross. Those glorious tokens of His Death and Passion, presented as an offering before the throne of God, plead for us continually. His Presence in heaven is in itself an unceasing act of intercession for us; because, though the sacrifice was consecrated and perfected by the shedding of blood on the Cross, its power and efficacy are perpetuated by the constant offering of it in our Lord's Person before God. But further, we are told in Scripture that He ever lives to make intercession for us, whereby we are to understand that He also prays for us. How, my brethren, are we to reconcile this with the duty of praying to Him? We pray to Him because He is God; but if so, how can He pray for us? Is not prayer a mark of inferiority, and a sign of humiliation? But how can He, who is co-equal with

Digitized by Google

the Father and with the Holy Ghost, be any way inferior? or how can He bear any mark of humiliation in His glory? To intercede, would seem to imply a want of power to grant that which is sought. How, then, can He who expressly promised, "If ye shall ask any thing in My Name, I will do it," intercede by way of prayer?

The key to these difficulties, my brethren, is found in the great fact of our Lord's two-fold nature. He is both God and Man: as God, always in glory, the Object of worship, the Giver of all good; as Man, humbled in the flesh, now glorified. As God, He could never intercede by way of prayer; neither, as Man, does He pray by any reason of need or humiliation. While He was on earth, He prayed as having infirmity; He prayed not only for us, but even for Himself. "In the days of His Flesh He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." While He humbled Himself "in the days of His flesh," He prayed as a part of the work He had to do; it was the accomplishing of the redemption of the world, for the blotting out of the sin of mankind. This prayer of humiliation passed away with the sharpness of the Cross, to which it was related, of which it was the shadow. The prayers which He offered being yet on earth, were a part of His obedience and suffering, to take away the sin of the world. All this, therefore, is excluded from His intercession now in heaven.

Digitized by Google

excluded from His intercession now in heaven. When He entered into the holy place, He left all these tokens of infirmity outside the veil.

But still it is most true that He prays for us as Man, though not by reason of any infirmity of His own. He is not only our Prophet and our King, but our great High Priest. "He is a Priest for ever," St. Paul says, "after the order of Melchizedek." "He has been consecrated to an unchangeable Priesthood;" and in virtue of that office, and as the Head of the Church, He ever intercedes and prays for the body still on earth.

His present intercession, then, does not in any way detract from the glory which belongs to Him as the eternal Son of God. It is a part of His exaltation to the Throne of His mediatorial kingdom: it is the carrying out and bringing to completion the eternal purpose of God from the very beginning, that the salvation of mankind should be effected through a Mediator. And Christ, having united our human nature unto the Godhead, and having become the Head and Representative of the whole human race, ascended up into heaven, that He might be for ever the one Mediator between God and Man, as the Man Jesus Christ.

"God," writes St. Augustine, "could bestow no greater gift on man, than to make His Word, by whom He created all things, to be their Head, and to unite them to Him as His members; so that He might be both Son of God and Son of Man; as



Digitized by Google

God, one with the Father; as Man, one with man: so that when we speak with God in prayer, we might not separate the Son from Him: and when the Body of the Son prays, He might not separate His Body from Himself; so that He Himself, the Saviour of His Body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, might be one, Who prays for us, and prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our High Priest, He prays in us as our Head, He is prayed to by us as our God."

He prays, then, for us as our Priest and Sacrifice, in His own Name, and by the power of His own atonement; now no more in humiliation, but in glory. Time was when He prayed that His work might be made perfect in His own Person, and in itself; "Father, glorify Thy Son." Now His prayer is, that what He has accomplished may be applied to and made perfect in His whole mystical Body, and in every member of the same. His intercession is for His whole Church, and for every one of us in particular, that the work of His Cross and Passion may be applied to the healing of our souls: that what He wrought for us may be wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore His intercession is continuous and unceasing. It ever has been, and ever shall be, until the last of His members upon earth shall be made perfect: then cometh the end. Until that day it is the source of all grace; from it all sacraments and mysteries derive their power. The whole work of

Digitized by Google

His Incarnation is applied to us by His intercession within the veil. The whole fruit gathered by His Church on earth, is the visible accomplishment of His Divine prayer in the world unseen. It is the strength of our prayers, the stay of our hope, our help in temptation, the source of our perseverance.

So long, then, as His Church remains militant on earth, so long will His prayers be offered up in her behalf; so long as each of His members has to combat against sin and evil, and suffering sorrow, so long will the great High Priest aid him with the might of His intercession, and make each recurring Eucharist to be the channel of that aid to his soul.

But the sense of the great blessing of our Lord's intercession is immeasurably enhanced when we dwell, not only on the manner in which it is exercised, but also on its perfections. For who is it that intercedes for us? Is it a mere earthly friend, of whose love and constancy we never can be quite sure; whose interest in us may flag, through absence or lapse of time, or from some neglect and indifference on our part? We never can be quite certain that one or other of these causes may not separate man from man. But how should it ever be so with the Divine Intercessor, who, though He be Man, yet is also filled with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and is one with Him Who is perfect love? Love brought Him from heaven; love nailed Him, my brethren, to the Cross, and love constrains Him to lift up His pierced hands in our behalf before His Father

Digitized by Google

in heaven. That love, which could induce Him to stoop so low, and endure so much, that Divine charity can never fail; whatever length of time may elapse before the coming of His kingdom, and the gathering in of His elect; however frequent and inexcusable our acts of coldness, and indifference, and of neglect towards Him; however much we may grieve Him by our backslidings, and our resistance to His gracious assistances,—yet His love, because it is Divine and perfect, never faileth. It may shew itself in ways we wot not of; it may hide itself beneath crosses and disappointment, or the sharper pangs of suffering and sorrow; but still, when the stricken soul yields itself to His influence, and looks upon the Cross,—or still more, when it draws near to the Blessed Eucharist, and beholds there the touching memorials of His Passion, the burden of its grief is lightened, for it feels that there is One near whose love can never wax cold.

But, brethren, the Lord's intercession has this further perfection,—it is the prayer of perfect human sympathy. This is manifestly one of the strongest grounds of our comfort and trust in this act of His mercy. If we could think of Him only as God, or even as an angel, there would seem to be such a wide gulf between us, that however much we might trust His love and His knowledge, yet the peculiar consolation derived from the feeling that He could associate Himself with us in our joys and sorrows would not exist. And for this very reason our

Digitized by Google

Lord "took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." He descended to the lowest step of the scale of intelligent creatures, and was made man in our nature; for in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a *merciful* and faithful High Priest. For in that He Himself hath "suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." Therefore, also, our Lord was not only made Man, but perfect Man. He took to Himself our human passions and affections, so far as they are lawful and innocent; that by shewing them, He might be able to correct in us whatever is sinful and perverted in them, so that in being willing to experience them in Himself, He has been enabled to heal them in us; by sharing them, He has become their remedy; and as by taking upon Himself the form of a servant, He has acquired for us free pardon, and by His humiliation and death has become the source of our life and glory; so by sharing in our fears and in our repugnance to suffering, He has acquired that perfect sympathy, on which we feel we may repose with the utmost confidence.

My brethren, we remember those mysterious and touching words which fell from our Lord's lips during His agony in the garden,—"O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He then most truly spoke the words of our weakness, to which He had voluntarily submitted; and in thus stoop-

Digitized by Google

ing to our misery, He acquired that perfect sense of our infirmities, which enables Him to obtain for us, by His all-prevailing intercession, the special grace and assistance we need. It is on this fact of His perfect sympathy that St. Paul grounds his encouragement to us, to trust in His mediation, and to approach God with confidence in prayer. "We have not," he says, "an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The mysterious knowledge of personal experience, of personal suffering, in human flesh, which He gained on earth, He has still in heaven. He knows us, as perfect Man, even now that He is standing before the eternal throne; "Let us, therefore," St. Paul adds, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Loving us, then, with a perfect love, and knowing us, not only by the perfect knowledge of His Godhead, but also by that more intimate and personal knowledge derived from the actual experience of our infirmities and wants, He intercedes for us perpetually according to our respective trials.

And when, my brethren, think you, can you hope to render that intercession available for your wants, and to bring yourself within its reach, if not at the Holy Eucharist, when the great offering is displayed in virtue of which the Intercessor Himself pleads for us? When are we so closely united with Him, as His members in that all-prevailing act as when, in

Digitized by Google

the blessed Eucharistic Sacrifice, we offer before God the memorials of that great atoning Sacrifice on Calvary, and present before Him, under the outward veils of bread and wine, the mysterious presence of that Body, which was once crucified on the Cross, and is now glorified, and ascended up on high? Let us, then, learn to bring all our special sorrows and needs to Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Let us be sure, though He is ever watching over us, and ever ready to help in time of need, that we do draw forth the power and efficacy of His intercession in a special manner, when we are pleading in act and deed the merits of the sacrifice which He is ever offering in heaven. The truth, and reality, and prevailing efficacy of our Lord's intercession in our behalf, will at such times become more vividly impressed upon us, and afford stronger encouragement and consolation; for though with our eyes we cannot pierce the veil which separates heaven from earth, and that which is material from that which is spiritual, yet in the Holy Eucharist faith will assert her power, and disclose to our adoring gaze the very presence of the Lord Himself, who, as both Priest and Victim in one Person, is at once the source and the strength of all prayer and intercession before God.

But, brethren, the Holy Eucharist not only makes us sharers of the benefit of Christ's intercession as regards ourselves, but confers upon us the high prerogative of joining with Him in acts of intercession

Digitized by Google

for others. We hardly realize as we ought that, in virtue of our union with Christ, as members of one body of which He is the head, we are privileged to help each other, and to further the perfecting of the whole body of the Church, by our prayers and intercession. "We are to pray," St. Paul says, "with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." And again, in detail, "I exhort that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority." This duty is based on the fact of Christianity being a social religion. If Christians are not isolated individuals, living separate and independent of each other, but members of a body living together, then they will pray together; and united prayer is necessarily of an intercessory character, as being offered for each other, and for the whole, and for self as one of the whole.

In proportion, then, as unity, of which the one bread, composed of many particles, in the blessed Eucharist is a significant emblem, is an especial Gospel duty, so does Gospel prayer partake of a social character; and intercession becomes a token of the Divine appointment of a Church Catholic.

Doubtless, our first prayers ever must be for ourselves; our own salvation is our personal concern. Till we labour to secure it, till we try to live religiously, and pray to be enabled to do so, nay, and have made some progress, it is but hypocrisy, or at best it is over bold to busy ourselves with others.

Digitized by Google

"God heareth not sinners," we are told, but yet "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In virtue of our adoption into the family of Christ; in virtue of our union with Him through a living faith, and through the Sacraments; in virtue especially of the Holy Eucharist, in which we are privileged to join with Him in offering the sacrifice which is the source and strength of all prayer, we are allowed, nay, we are bound, to pray for others as well as for ourselves.

As sinners, in our natural state we could not dare to hope to prevail with God; but as Christians, gifted with His grace, and renewed after the Divine image, and made partakers of every gift which can tend to make us worthy of His Presence, we have conferred upon us that privilege which implies or involves all others, and brings us into nearest resemblance to Himself,—the privilege of intercession. This is the Christian's special prerogative; and if he does not exercise it, he has not risen to the conception of his real place among created beings. It is true he is a son of Adam, and has to undergo a future judgment; but as a baptized Christian and a member of Christ, he is something besides. He is raised into a higher state of being, and into a capacity for better and nobler things. Viewed in himself, it is true he ever prays for pardon and confesses sin; but viewed in Christ, he has access unto the grace wherein we stand, and "rejoices in hope of the glory of God." Viewed in the light of his baptismal pri-

Digitized by Google

vileges, living in a state of grace, and in close communion with his Lord and Saviour, he is so far made after the pattern of Christ,—he is in his degree what Christ is in all His fulness; and, therefore, what Christ does, he does also. Christ intercedes above, and he intercedes below. He lingers not in the doorway, praying for pardon; having been allowed to share in the grace of the Lord's Passion, to die with Him, and rise again, he is in a capacity for higher things.

His prayer, therefore, takes a higher range, and contemplates not merely himself, but others also. And thus regarding all the events and circumstances of the world around him, and all the changes and troubles which perplex and bewilder it, as steps in the plan of God's Providence, he associates himself with his Lord in His prayer that the will of God may be done, and prays for those who are the instruments either for promoting or frustrating it.

Brethren, let us remember, then, that the privilege of intercession is a trust committed to all Christians who have a clear conscience, and are in full communion with God. Let us, then, learn to exercise our gift, and make ourselves more worthy of it. By words and works we can but reach and influence a few; by our prayers we may benefit the whole world, and every individual in it, high and low, friend, stranger, and enemy.

Let us remember, too, that each recurring celebration of the Holy Eucharist reminds us of this great

Digitized by Google

duty, and affords us the fittest opportunity for its exercise. When we see, then, presented before God the very offering which Christ presents in heaven; when we plead that offering which He is pleading in our behalf, then let us make mention not only of our own griefs, and sorrows, and difficulties, but let us, with true Christian unselfishness, give others —our friends, our family, our relatives, our country, and all in authority in it—the benefit of our intercession.

And, lastly, if so much depends upon us, let us look to it that we so live that our prayers may be available, and our intercession the lifting up of holy hands. May we be diligent in keeping the mirror of our hearts unsullied and bright, so as to reflect the image of the Son of God in the Father's Presence, clear from the dust and stains of this world, from envies and jealousies, strife and bitterness, fretfulness and discontent, indolence and selfishness, pride and boastfulness! May we, in hearty reliance on the love shewn us in so many acts of God's Providence, but specially in the gift of His Blessed Sacrament, strive under all circumstances and in all trials, at all times and among all people, to be resigned to His will, for the sake of Him who surrendered all for our sakes!

Digitized by Google

# LENT LECTURES ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

## No. VI.

### Preparation of Heart necessary for the Due Reception of the Holy Eucharist.

MY brethren, it has been the object of the preceding lectures to point out what the Church teaches us in accordance with Holy Scripture, concerning the nature and dignity of the Holy Eucharist, and the benefits which accrue from it to her faithful members. In the course of my observations, however, it has already been stated, that though the Sacraments are the appointed means and instruments by which the restoration of our fallen nature is effected, they cannot act independently of the will of Him from whom they derive their power, or produce any effect upon us irrespectively of the condition in which they find us.

Thus, with regard to the Holy Eucharist, there is a certain analogy between its two parts, the outward and the inward. There is the outward part, the bread and wine, which is the food of the body; there is the inward part, the Body and Blood of Christ, which is the food of the soul; that just as

Digitized by Google

bodily functions are necessary for the profitable reception of the one, so the functions of the soul are requisite for the perfect reception of the other. But the functions of the body depend entirely upon the existence and power of a living principle within it. As we gradually cease to live, the body not only ceases to act, but loses the power of deriving to itself any fresh strength or nourishment from its natural food; for there can be no power of assimilation in a dead body: those functions by which alone the body could derive to itself fresh strength have ceased to perform their office, because the moving principle itself, the life, has departed from it.

And as with our natural food, so also with our spiritual food; it cannot benefit us, unless it finds within us the principle of life. The soul cannot profit by its nourishment any more than the body, unless it lives. It cannot derive any benefit to itself from the heavenly food, unless it has a capacity for receiving it, and of being affected by it. That heavenly food, we must remember, is not dead matter which affects our bodies, but living food, Christ Himself, in His living Body and Blood, who comes to be our food and to strengthen and nourish us, by uniting us closer to Himself, and absorbing all our affections and powers into Himself, so that He may in very truth be said to live in us.

But how can He, who is the life itself, connect Himself with that which is dead? How can a mortified limb, which has lost all its vitality, remain in contact

Digitized by Google

with the living body? How, then, can the Holy Sacrament, in which Christ comes to impart Himself to our souls in all the truth of our living humanity, benefit us, unless our souls be full of life, and able to apprehend the nature of the heavenly Visitant? Hence the Holy Eucharist can be administered only to those who have been baptized, because until that sacrament of our regeneration has been received, the life of the spirit has not been imparted to the soul. Then, first, our spiritual life begins, and the germs of those powers and faculties, by which the soul exercises its spiritual functions, are implanted; then, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, our souls for the first time, in a true sense, begin to live; then we are made members of the Body of Christ, and so made partakers also of His life. For "we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of *life*." Therefore it has been said by one of the early Fathers (St. Cyril), "We exclude from the holy table those who are catechumens, (that is, those who are being prepared for Baptism,) but have not yet been enriched with the gift of the Holy Ghost. For He does not dwell in those who are not yet baptized; but when they have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, then nothing hinders them from touching also the Saviour Christ. Therefore to those who desire to partake of the mystical Eucharist, the ministers of the Divine mysteries proclaim 'holy

Digitized by Google

things for holy persons,' teaching that the participation of that which is sacred befits those who are sanctified by the Spirit."

Baptism, then, is the first qualification for the Holy Eucharist, because it establishes a spiritual connexion between the soul and the Humanity of Christ, whereby we are made *living* members of His mystical Body, and are endowed with those capacities and powers by which we derive fresh streams of life and strength from Him.

But the principle of life being once imparted, cannot remain inactive. It must afford indications of its existence through its influence upon that in which it dwells. The life of the body shews itself in the due performance of the bodily functions, in the due control and active exercise of all powers which properly belong to the body: the powers of thought, and speech, and motion, these are all seen to be doing their appointed work in the living organism of the body; and so also will it be with the soul and its spiritual life. Quickened by the loving power of the Holy Spirit, it must of necessity put forth its life in the exercise of the functions which belong to the soul itself. It must exercise those faculties which are proper to the Spirit, and which with its life have been imparted to it. It must believe, and it must love. Faith and love, these are the two spiritual faculties, in the active and ever-increasing exercise of which the life of the soul will indicate its fulness and strength. These are the heavenly graces which

Digitized by Google

the Holy Eucharist ever tends to nourish and to quicken, and these are the dispositions without which that blessed sacrament can in no wise benefit us.

And, first, with regard to faith. This, we know, is the faculty by which we hold communion with that which is not seen. By it we realize to ourselves, and are influenced by what is removed beyond the reach of our bodily senses, and could not have been known by the unaided efforts of reason. And, therefore, all that is matter of revelation to us, all that pertains to the spiritual world, is matter on which our faith is exercised; so that this faculty is a special indication of the life of the soul, because by it that power of communion with God is restored in which its true life consists. If, then, we are to be able to apprehend the nature of the Blessed Eucharist, and to be in a condition to profit by the invisible and spiritual though most real gift therein bestowed, is it not clear that we must first of all put forth the life of our souls in firm and actual faith? For, as no divine mystery can be apprehended and made influential without it, so in respect of the Holy Eucharist is it especially required; because in no other mystery has God so hidden Himself as in this. In the world He is hidden from our senses, which can only perceive what is outward and material; but He shews Himself there to the eye of our reason, which beholds God reflected as in a mirror in the wondrous works of creation. But this cannot be said of the Holy Eucharist, for here, besides hiding Himself

Digitized by Google

from our senses, He hides Himself from our natural reason, which of itself cannot pierce the veils by which the Divine nature of our Lord remains concealed beneath His human nature, and His human nature is again hidden beneath the outward creatures of bread and wine.

If, then, we would profit by that Blessed Sacrament, we must strive to quicken our faith, and to realize firmly and stedfastly the nature of Him who comes to us therein. We must, it is true, believe with equal firmness and stedfastness in all that He has done for us, in the great work of compassion and mercy which He sealed by His death once for all upon the Cross. We must believe that the merits there acquired for us are all-sufficient and inexhaustible; but if that Death and Passion are to avail for our salvation, if those merits are to be efficacious for the cleansing of our souls from sin, and for our entire forgiveness, then must we believe that Christ Himself is still working in our behalf, and that in and through the Sacrament of His own ordaining He still vouchsafes to visit us, that He may apply to us the benefits He has purchased for us. And that He does really come to us there, I say, must be matter for faith, for all that relates to this great mystery is infinitely above our reason. Our eyes behold common bread and wine, our ears hear nothing extraordinary, all our bodily senses are at fault; by faith only can we draw near to the heavenly Visitant, Who declares His Presence in the



Digitized by Google

Sacrament, for by faith only can we believe that God and man are together here, hidden beneath the humble veils of bread and wine, which we see, and touch, and consume. And hence, our first act before approaching must be an act of faith, to believe and say with the prophet, "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself. O God of Israel, the Saviour."

We have need, therefore, carefully to examine ourselves respecting our faith, before we draw near to Holy Communion. Have we implicitly submitted to the truth of our blessed Lord's own words of institution? Have we never reasoned like the Jews, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Or again, has the brightness and clearness of that faith, which we once possessed when we first drew near to the altar, faded away and become weakened and languid through carelessness in our preparation for the Holy Sacrament, through forgetfulness of what we owe to it, or through lukewarmness and want of reverence at the Holy Communion itself? These are matters for our most serious consideration when we are examining ourselves, and seeking to render ourselves as fit as may be, to draw near to Christ in His blessed Sacrament.

But, as faith is the faculty by which we apprehend the nature and blessedness of the great gift bestowed upon us in the Holy Eucharist, so love is the principle by which we hold fast to it and enjoy it. Love is the principle by which our spirits act upon each other; and therefore love supplies the conditions

Digitized by Google

in which our Incarnate Head is mystically related to His members. He, being God as well as man, is love itself; it was the very fulness of His love which caused Him to leave the bosom of His Father, and dwell amongst sinful men on earth; it was love that nailed Him to the Cross; and what but love can constrain Him now not only to plead our cause in heaven, but vouchsafe His Presence with us in the Holy Sacrament. And as this Divine principle caused Him to unite Himself to us, so must it ever continue to be the bond by which we are united to Him. As our faith waxes stronger and clearer, so will our confidence and assurance in His Divine Presence be more confirmed. But as our love glows with a brighter flame, we shall not only know that He is there, we shall feel also that we are united to Him; that His life is our life, that His will is our will, that all our affection must be centred in Him, that all our powers of mind and body must be given up to His service, that no sacrifice can be too great for Him to require of us, no devotion too entire to requite His love for us.

Hence, the love which qualifies us for the Holy Eucharist is no rude sentiment of the imagination, but an influential principle of the heart. If we would examine ourselves on this point, let us not ask, what do I feel? but what am I doing? How am I behaving myself towards Him who would draw me to Himself by the cords of love in the Blessed Eucharist? What response does my heart make

Digitized by Google

to His invitation? What indications does my daily life afford that He is really the one chief object of my affection? Love seeks to do all it can to please the beloved one. It considers no sacrifice too great to comply with the wishes and promote the interests of one on whom its affection is fixed. It does not wait to have those wishes pointed out, but is ever seeking to find opportunities of gratifying them.

My brethren, this is the effect of natural love, which binds us to each other in this world, and we feel that it is a divine and holy principle, that it belongs to that higher nature which comes from God. But if so, what ought that supernatural love, which comes to us in all its purity and fulness from Christ Himself, to constrain us to do for Him on whom it professes to be fixed? How does our whole life of thought, and word, and act, become at once a witness either for or against us, when we reflect on what our love for Christ as His members should have required of us! How needful must it be for every one of us to examine whether we are living in any degree up to these requirements; whether our love is not only real, but constant and unwavering; whether it burns as brightly in the dark hour of affliction and trial, as in the sunshine of outward prosperity; whether it leads us at all seasons, and under all circumstances, to turn to our Lord as the source of strength, and find in Him a sure refuge and support!

Faith, then, working by love, is the necessary

Digitized by Google

qualification for those who would benefit by the Holy Eucharist. Belief that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, is the beginning of faith; belief and love, is the increase; but belief, love, and consequent action, is the consummation of true faith. For it costs the mind but little to submit to truth, if it be certainly revealed by God. It costs the heart and affections but little to bid the lips pronounce a few expressions of love: words are not always accompanied by feelings: and feeling, when it does exist, is often devoid of worth, for it is often barren, and produces no fruit. Good works are the proof of our faith and of our love; so far, therefore, as we do not work consistently for God, we have reason to believe that our faith and our love are not such as He would have them to be, who comes to visit us in the Holy Eucharist; and therefore not such as to enable us to draw forth from Him all the benefit He could desire to impart to us.

Let us be careful, then, whilst we recognise the reality and the dignity of the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist, to bear in mind that its benefit to us must depend upon the condition of heart in which we draw near to it. The great gift therein bestowed, is present by the will of Him who gives Himself to us; but that gift, all-precious and life-giving as it is, cannot shed its strengthening influence over our souls, unless they are previously prepared to receive it; unless they are full of that faith and love of which we have been speaking. Hence the great

Digitized by Google

necessity of meditation and self-examination before we draw near to the holy altar. For in this way only can we rekindle our waning faith and love, and discover the sins and infirmities which have tended to dissolve the tie by which Christ has unveiled Himself to us. By reflecting on the infinite treasure we are about to receive, we learn to judge ourselves severely; by examination, with prayer and confession of sin, we cleanse our consciences, and become worthy to seek and to obtain the full remission of our guilt from Christ Himself in this Holy Sacrament.

The more frequent, then, our communions, the more careful let us be in preparing ourselves, lest we lose the fruit of them. Let us be real and earnest. Let us be on our guard against the deadening effects of custom and mere habit in our religious acts. Let us test the benefit of our communions by the growth of our spiritual life, by our greater self-control, and our increasing hold on all those graces of the Spirit which are the true and unfailing sign of the transforming influence upon our hearts. Thus prepared, let us come to the Holy Eucharist with a firm faith and confidence in its inestimable benefit to us, in the firm belief that Christ Himself, the very source of our life and of all holiness, shall come to us there, to dwell within us, to feed and strengthen us, to enlighten our mind, enkindle our heart, calm and rule our passions, purify our desires, and give us others purer and more heavenly.

Digitized by Google

Let us come in the firm belief that He bestows on us, through these precious gifts, a greater faculty for the performance of all those duties which lead towards our blessed home. For love burns brighter with every worthy communion, and the greater our love, the less our pain in labouring for those we love; and so the burden of the law grows easier to bear, whilst the hardest duties become more easy to fulfil. Truly, then, has it been said that the Holy Eucharist is a gift at once sweet and glorious; glorious because it manifests God's majesty and greatness; sweet, because in it God enriches whom He loves, and impoverishes not Himself because He gives for His own sake.

And lastly, let us come full of hope conjoined with faith and love, seeing that it is moreover a most holy and perfect preparation, as well as a sure pledge, of our future home in heaven, insensibly disposing the heart and spirit to their promised blessedness there; the spirit, by enlightening it that it may know God; the heart, by kindling the Divine fire of His love within it. Thus Holy Communion leads us on from faith to hope, and from hope to fruition. Reception here is a preparation for possession there. Divine sustenance received here though under a veil, is the fittest preparation for being satisfied in all eternity with that same substance unveiled and undisguised in everlasting bliss.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XVII.

## Self-Denial.

ST. MATTHEW xvi. 25.

*"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."*

THIS, my brethren, is one of those sayings which, to the carnal mind, conveys no meaning whatever. Like so many of the most precious truths of Holy Scripture, it is clothed in words purposely adapted to conceal it from the irreverent, seemingly contradictory and trifling; whilst to the humble and earnest enquirer they reveal a most deep and real truth. Twice were they repeated by our Lord, and so full and comprehensive are they, and so close and important in their bearing on our daily life, that, study them as we may, we can never exhaust their riches, or find them fail in their application. To believe them, and to believe Him who spake them, is life and blessedness; to doubt these words, or to act contrary to them, is to lose everything; for it is to lose Christ, and in losing Him, to lose our own selves.

What, then, are these words? what is the mighty truth which they contain? what is this seeking to

Digitized by Google

save our life, which brings with it (according to the sure word of Christ) the losing of our life? what is this willingness to lose our life, in which only we find or save it for eternity?

Now the seeking to save our life, against which Christ warns us, is the seeking to enjoy our life according to the dictates of the flesh and the world, the laying out our life on the scheme of pleasing ourselves and indulging ourselves, instead of the plan of pleasing God and denying ourselves. As you will observe, the words come immediately after the command to take up the Cross: "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

So that, you perceive, to seek to save our life, is to refuse to do this which Christ bids,—is to refuse to take up the Cross. Holy Scripture affords examples of those who, seeking to save their lives, lost them. Dives sought to save his life; he thought to find his life in the purple and the fine linen, and the daily sumptuous fare; he thought his life was in those things. That man whose fields brought forth largely, and who bade his soul enjoy itself for many years, he also counted that he had found his life, that it was in his "much goods laid up for many years;" while yet upon that very night he was about to make proof that a man's life does *not* consist in the

Digitized by Google

abundance of the things which he possesses. St. Peter wished our Blessed Lord to save His life in this evil sense; when, the Lord having spoken of His decease at Jerusalem, and of all that awaited Him there, he interfered, and said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." For this he got but severe rebuke, and was called Satan; for, indeed, what was he doing but what Satan had done before, when in the wilderness he also proposed to Christ to save His life, to choose worldly glory, the kingdoms of the world, and their pomp and ease, instead of worldly suffering and worldly shame for His portion?

And we, my brethren, we are seeking in this same false sense to save our lives, whenever we shrink from unwelcome duty, whenever it seems to us that the end of life is to make provision for the flesh, whensoever we choose ease instead of the labour which God lays on us, whensoever we refuse to spend or to be spent for Christ's sake.

But what is the issue of this endeavour? The Lord Himself has told us: "He that will save his life shall lose it." Nor does this merely mean that at the end, that at the day of judgment, the life of such a man shall be forcibly rent away from him, and eternal death then be his portion; that till that day he shall have found it and kept it, and but for this forcible interference of God that he would have kept it for ever.

My brethren, the day of judgment is not the day of the sinner's loss; it is the day, indeed, when that

Digitized by Google

loss shall be confirmed, and made clear in all its fearful reality. It is the day when that loss is completed, when the terrible certainty that he has lost all, that he is shut out from God's Presence, flashes upon him; but the loss itself has been going on long before. Whenever a man sets himself in opposition to God and His will, he is losing a portion of his true life. For he who opposes God's will, and follows his own in preference, is striving to act as an independent being, is contradicting the relation in which he stands to God, is in fact separating himself from God, Who alone is the source of all life.

He, then, that would save his life by disobeying God, has been in reality losing it,—has been losing a portion of it, of his true life, at each of his endeavours thus falsely to save it. At each moment when the world seemed more to him than God, at each allowed selfishness, at each unpermitted snatching at a worldly joy, at each choosing to serve himself rather than to serve others, he lost his life, he lost a portion of it, of his true life which was in God. He won a false joy, but he lost a true one; he opened to himself what may have seemed a fountain of joy, yet which proved only a muddy pool, soon to be dried up; but he closed against himself a spring of gladness, that would have sprung up to life eternal.

Be sure, my brethren, that our Lord's words are real and true, that you shall lose your life if you seek to save it; and you shall lose it, not merely by-and-by, but you shall lose it *now*. Lay out

Digitized by Google

your lives for enjoyment, and enjoyment shall fly from you altogether. Seek your own profit and advancement without regard to God's will, and you shall be a stranger to all true contentment and peace of mind. Dare to think that anything but love can make you rich, that anything is of worth save a place in God's heart, and a place in your brethren's hearts; that anything can truly enrich you save this loving and being loved; dare to think that money can make you rich and happy; that success in life is the great object of life; dare to think this, and to act upon it, and you shall be stricken with poverty, with poverty of spirit, with barrenness of soul, with coldness and dreariness of heart. Having sought to save your lives, you shall lose them, inevitably lose all which makes life to be worth the living.

As, then, there are those amongst us who have lately devoted themselves afresh to God in Confirmation, and have received His grace to enable them to carry out the great work of perfecting their Christian character, I would wish to say a few words to them on the nature of that work.

Brethren, see we not this even in the things of this world? see we not that which is a sufficiently near approach to this fact of the spiritual world, to explain it, and to represent it vividly to our minds? A soldier that flees from battle, who, when others for duty and for country are giving themselves to wounds and to death, shrinks from danger, he may, by so doing, in the literal sense of the words, save his life; but has he not really lost it,—lost all which makes life

Digitized by Google

worth the living? When branded as a coward, he shrinks from the gaze of his fellow-men, will he not feel that death itself were to be preferred to such disgrace, and that nothing remains for him but to drag out in obscurity a life of shame and dishonour?

But we pass on to the second part of our Saviour's declaration; "Whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." Here comparisons are at hand, drawn from earth and things earthly, which in part may help us to realize our Lord's words. The merchant, when he commits his precious wares, his costly merchandizes, all which was already safely his, to the perils of the deep, to the thousand chances of the sea, what is he but losing his wares that he may find them, that they may come back to him in a richer shape, and in a larger abundance? And the husbandman, when he casts his seed into the ground, he loses his seed; it is no longer his, he could not recover it if he would,—it has turned into corruption. Yet he loses that he may find it, that it may come back thirty, sixty, or an hundred-fold into his garners.

This image Christ Himself has appropriated and sanctified, when speaking of the life of the Church, which should have its root in His death. When speaking of that death as life-giving to many, He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And we can understand further what being willing

Digitized by Google

to lose our life is, by taking two or three examples from among the saints of God.

Abraham was willing to lose his life when he obeyed that voice which said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred," and journeyed to a land which he knew not, and where he had not a foot of land in possession. And Moses, when he chose the reproach of Christ, rather than the riches of Egypt, and to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And Joseph, when a dungeon seemed better to him than to sin against God. And the three children, when they chose the fiery flames, rather than to do guilty homage to an heathen idol. And St. Paul, when he exchanged all honours that his country could have given him, to take part with the crucified Galilean. All these lost their lives that they might find them. They threw away their life and all that it had promising, all that it had flattering, counting it all cheap as clods of the ground, that they might find their lives in God. And, brethren, think not that this blessed losing of the life, to which Christ summons us, is confined to those great ventures of faith, those single and memorable acts of a mighty reliance upon God, which are written for ever in the record of His Word. At every moment of our lives, God says unto each of us—Wilt thou trust Me? Wilt thou yield Me thy life to receive it, an higher and nobler life? Wilt thou die unto thyself, that thou mayest live unto Me? Wilt thou lose that thou mayest find? You will ask, perhaps, How is God saying this unto Me? He is say-

Digitized by Google

ing it, my brethren, whenever He puts in your way an act of self-denial; whenever He bids you do something unwelcome to the natural mind, from which flesh and blood would shrink; whenever He summons you to labour, when you would fain have chosen ease; to a low place, when you would fain have had a high one; to dishonour, when the world offers you honour; to painfulness, when the world would have yielded you pleasure; to a fast, when you might have feasted; to the house of sorrow, when the world would have introduced you to the house of mirth. The summons to Christian almsgiving, is it not a slight realizing of this? For what is Christian almsgiving, when it is at all worthy of the name? You throw forth, that you may receive back; you cast upon the waters, that you may find after many days; you believe that so to lose your earthly mammon is really to save it—that you will find it an hundredfold in the prayers of God's poor—in the affections of His suffering saints—in God Himself, who will make Himself your debtor for all that you have lent to Him.

Do not hesitate, then, my brethren, to believe this truth, and to act upon it—that to lose your life is to find it. Dare to believe that the law of self-sacrifice is the law of God's moral world; that no man may live for himself; that if he will attempt it his life shall be no life, for it shall be death. To this law the Son of God set His seal when He lived for men and when He died for them; yea, the Father set His seal to it also when He gave up the well-beloved Son of

Digitized by Google

Love—the Son that had been in His bosom from eternity—to the shameful death of the Cross; so that this law of self-sacrifice not merely rules in earth, but it rules in heaven. Only in hell it rules not, and therefore hell is hell; and earth, as it denies this law, becomes like to hell; as it approves it, it becomes like to heaven. Fear not, then, to act on this law. Do not hesitate to throw away your life, that you may receive back a richer life. Each thing that promises pleasure to the flesh, that flatters the natural mind,—well,—if God bids you renounce it, do so boldly. Lose your life and you shall find it; live for your brethren in acts of patience, of self-denial, of labour, and you shall be living truly for yourself. Think not that such a life will be dreary, that such a life will be desolate, that such a life will be empty of all real enjoyment. Far from it; the witness of a good conscience, the harmony of your will with God's will, the conviction that you are resting on a love that watches over you, always and everywhere, will afford you, as the children of God, far higher and more real happiness than any that the children of the world experience. You will have more joy in your hearts, more life in your souls, more gladness on your countenances. And why? Because, believing Christ's Word, and daring to lose your lives for His sake, you are evermore finding them again in Him.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XVIII.

## Growth in Grace gradual.

2 ST. PETER iii. 18.

"*Grow in grace.*"

IN speaking to you a few Sundays ago on the subject of perfecting the Christian character according to each man's capacity, I observed, that one of the chief obstacles which hinders this all-important work is indolence. Many persons feel sensible of their deficiencies, and desire to improve, but a natural indisposition to engage in a long and difficult work, springing from an indolent and sluggish spirit, restrains them from taking any active steps towards carrying out their desires. And so, contenting themselves with their bare acknowledgment of sinfulness, and taking credit to themselves for their candour, they shelter themselves under some one or other of the many excuses, which a deceitful heart is ever ready to suggest for inactivity in the work of their improvement.

But let us suppose that a person deeply impressed with the force and personal application of our Lord's command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which



Digitized by Google

is in heaven is perfect," and that he has not only feebly and languidly desired to be a better Christian, but has resolved, in spite of indolence, in spite of natural disinclination to exertion, to stir up the grace of God which is in him, and to set heartily to work towards perfecting and completing the elements of godliness implanted within him. No doubt he has taken a most important step; for that deep and quickened desire after holiness, which results in a stedfast and determined resolution to seek it in God's appointed way, is the surest guarantee of ultimate success. But though such desires and resolutions are indispensable, both at the outset and throughout the course of our spiritual improvement, yet, unless we understand the nature of the work, and the true method by which God intends it to be carried out, we shall be liable to fall into grievous errors, which will effectually retard our advancement.

First, then, I would have you observe, that the perfecting the work of our sanctification, and the completion of the Christian character, must be gradual, and the result of continuous effort. I have just read St. Peter's words to you, in which he bids us *grow* in grace, using a figure drawn from the living things of nature, which are developed and brought to maturity slowly and gradually. And if you examine the other images and figures throughout the Christian's description of the Christian's progress, you will find that they are all in accordance with the idea of gra-

Digitized by Google

dual, though unintermittent, growth. The increase and development of spiritual life is ever set forth under figures of unceasing vitality and action and advancement. A child that increases in stature; a soldier, not waiting for the battle, but engaged in it; a runner pressing forward in the race; an athlete in the combat; a branch that bears fruit; grass that flourishes; wheat that ripens; a tree planted by the water side, whose leaf doth not wither, but brings forth fruit in due season; in all these you will observe the principle of unintermitted activity and energy as indispensable to the true end of their existence.

And the necessity of this gradual and continuous progress in the perfecting of the Christian character, arises from the fact that we are dealing with what is endued with life, even with our living souls. Spiritual life is under the same conditions as natural life: its laws of growth and increase are the same. Now we know well enough that a lifeless thing, a thing that has to be made, such as a watch or a picture, may undergo suspension in its construction, may be advanced to-day, neglected to-morrow, resumed the next day, and so on, without prejudice to its ultimate perfection. But we know that it is very different with a thing that lives and grows, such as a plant or a tree; we know that it cannot suffer such interruption without serious damage; it must needs advance gradually, yet incessantly, and if checked in its career, if cut off from its sustenance, if its vitality be intermitted, it cannot be restored

Digitized by Google

without great pains, its very existence is endangered, perhaps the life that is suspended may not come back at all. And if this is true of natural life, so also is it true with regard to spiritual life. If the growth of the plant cannot be checked and interrupted without serious injury, neither can the growth of the soul be neglected and thwarted without its very life being endangered.

Let us learn, then, from this consideration of the nature of the work in spiritual advancement, that fervent desires and fixed resolutions cannot supersede the necessity of patience and perseverance. Herein, my brethren, consists the very difficulty of the work, that it cannot be completed by any number of single efforts or struggles, however powerful. We cannot become perfect Christians through impulse, but by a sustained energy, which is, in fact, the prolongation of the life of impulse. Let this thought, then, of the gradual growth of the Christian character, be both our consolation to cheer us when we are disheartened because we do not make as rapid progress as we could desire, and also an incentive to more persevering and patient continuance in well-doing, when the indolence of spirit or the temptations of the world cause our efforts to flag.

But we learn also that the growth of the spiritual life must not only be *gradual*, but *continuous* and *unintermitting*. There is no more important truth to be learned regarding the work of sanctification than this, that we cannot remain stationary. We

Digitized by Google

cannot stand still. Not to advance is to go back, for change we necessarily must either for better or worse. You will remember that there are always two antagonistic powers contending for the possession of our souls. God in His love and mercy has undertaken the restoration of our fallen nature, and through the wondrous appliances of His grace is gradually fashioning us, and making us fit for His presence. But there is another, who, in the mystery of God's providence, is suffered to exert his power and influence to thwart that blessed work; Satan is ever at hand to seize his opportunity, and if by indolence or wilfulness we cause God to pause in His work, Satan fails not to turn our weakness to his own advantage, and to mar and deface the lineaments which God has already traced upon us. Whenever, then, we interrupt the work of grace in our hearts by want of watchfulness, or through yielding to temptation, we undo God's work, we fall back in the scale of advancement, and render it more difficult for ourselves to regain our former condition. And, further, we must bear in mind, that the whole current of our nature is inclining us to evil, and to grow in the image of Satan rather than that of God. In striving, therefore, to advance in spiritual perfection, we are like a man in the midst of a rapid river, who knows that if he relaxes for a moment in his efforts, he must inevitably be carried down the stream. The course we ought to take is so directly opposite to the current of our nature corrupted by

Digitized by Google

sin, that unless we labour and force ourselves to go on, we shall certainly be hurried back by the impetuous torrent of our passions. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." We must exert ourselves continuously and unintermittingly against the evil that is in us, or we shall quickly see ourselves carried back from that degree of perfection which we had before attained. They understand not the nature of spiritual life who think that it can ever be stationary, any more than the vast ocean, with its restless tides, is stagnant. Forward it must go, or backward. Active it must be for good or evil. It knows no neutrality. It must grow or rot.

Another characteristic of the work of spiritual improvement is that it is *silent* and *unobserved.* Such is our natural impatience, that we are too apt to be dissatisfied, and oftentimes disheartened because we cannot see the process, and behold the actual result of each several step in our progress towards increasing holiness. Our self-examinations, instead of bracing us to fresh and more sustained energy, too often leave us saddened, soured, and disappointed, because we have so few victories over our infirmities to recall, and so little apparent progress to reflect upon. We are saddened, but not humbled; we are yielding indeed to a secret pride, which rebels against the silent and secret methods by which Divine grace works within our hearts. Too often, also, this impatience will shew itself in

Digitized by Google

dissatisfaction with our allotted sphere of life, and our appointed line of duty. The thought will cross the mind, that if circumstances were changed, we could do greater things for God, and advance to a higher pitch of Christian perfection. We fancy ourselves worthy of greater privileges, and larger opportunities of cultivating the germs of the Christian character, and of devoting ourselves to God; forgetful all the while that God's ways are not as our ways, and that the most perfect holiness is the result not of great and spasmodic efforts, nor necessarily of vast and heroic acts of sacrifice, but of the secret, gradual, and silent influence of the Holy Spirit upon the character, through the daily and hourly acts and circumstances of a life of God's own appointment.

And this lesson is taught us by the growth of natural things, to which we find the increase of our soul's life to be closely analogous. What can be more silent and unobserved than the growth of a plant? Who can discern the several steps in the process, though the result is most distinct and perceptible? That it *has* grown since yesterday is manifest; that it was growing then, none could perceive, though we saw easily, that it was in the way to grow. And this is equally true, whether it be the observed of all observers, or secluded from the eyes of all, save One. Some precious bulb, brought from afar and watched with daily assiduity, it grows no faster for the watching and the cost; it makes no haste to

Digitized by Google

bloom because people are looking on. The wild anemone, in the rude March weather, struggling through its obscure life in the rough hedgerows, grows no less though none observe, but it accomplishes its little task according to its season. Or, if it be an acorn, which the wandering wind has dropt in some remote recess, it strikes root even there, though none is there to see, and drinks the dew of heaven, and matures its silent strength, and sheds its fruit in time; and all this quietly, as beneath the eye of God. These do not sound a trumpet before them, nor in restless self-consciousness bid men come and see the progress they are making,—the stately oak, the costly exotic, nor the hidden hedge-flower. They do not glory in their advancement, nor, on the other hand, are they querulous about their tardiness. Has this no meaning for us? They do not complain, or seek to grow in any other than in God's appointed way; they keep their place, and use their gifts, and do their task, and thus grow night and day—a silent mystery.

And it is thus the Christian grows in grace. It is thus the seed of spiritual life within advances to maturity. There will be no affectation of retiringness if God wills that he should come forth in the face of men; no shrinking from duties however humble, or however exalted; no hurried impatience to escape difficulties and temptations; no over-anxiety to go on faster than God has appointed, nor than the ordinances of God will carry us; no sub-

Digitized by Google

stitution of the process of untimely *forcing*, for that of timely *ripening*; but discharging at all times and places the allotted task of time and place, be it social or spiritual, public or private, active or contemplative, irksome or pleasant, observed or unobserved; and being rooted and grounded in love, and drawing his sustenance from Christ through His appointed means of grace, he grows night and day, in the day of joy, and in the night of trial; taking shower and sunshine thankfully alike; increasing secretly and in silence, but *certainly*, and, in the end, *manifestly* increasing in all that can adorn the Gospel of his Lord.

One more point I would notice as characteristic of the growth of our spiritual life, namely, that it is the result, not of simple acts or circumstances, or of any particular class of acts or circumstances taken separately, but of the combination and concurrence of all the varied, and sometimes apparently trifling, acts and incidents, which constitute our daily life. It is important to bear this in mind, since we are too apt to look upon religion and the work of spiritual advancement as a matter which may be considered by itself, and apart from the work of our daily life. We think of it as a duty which ought to be attended to in its proper place, but we forget,—though there are certain directly religious acts which are the chief means of help and strength to us, and which, of course, have their own proper times and seasons,—we forget, I say, that these only form a part of the

Digitized by Google

varied and numberless means by which our characters are being formed and moulded.

Doubtless, my brethren, we never can be too careful and diligent in the observance of all directly religious duties, to which the promise of a special blessing has been assigned—prayer, the reading of God's Word, the frequenting the public services of the Church, and above all, the faithful and regular receiving of the Blessed Sacrament; all these are as necessary to our spiritual life, as food is to our natural life. But the work of spiritual advancement does not *end* here. We have not finished and completed our parts when we have risen from our knees, or closed our Bibles, or left God's altar; we have indeed been strengthened and refreshed through communion with our Divine Lord in His appointed ordinances; we have obtained fresh power, fresh wisdom, and fresh knowledge of His will. But these are the instruments and weapons with which we are supplied, and it is in the ever-varied circumstances and events of daily life that they are to be used. By themselves they cannot bring us to perfection. They may remain dormant within us, and we shall be as far as ever from attaining holiness, though we are regular in seeking them. All the graces and gifts which come from the exercise of directly religious duties and privileges, cannot avail until they have been put forth into act, and have tended to the formation of religious habits and principles. These duties cannot be separated from others of a more

Digitized by Google

ordinary or secular character. On the contrary, they are to be means through which all the events and circumstances of our lives, and the duties consequent upon them, are to be made conducive to our spiritual advancement. Our various callings, trials, joys and sorrows, labours, relaxations, mercies, chastisements, are all working together for our spiritual discipline and culture.

And not only is this true generally with regard to the main tenor of our lives, but specially in respect of all the minute and varied incidents and acts of our daily course. The almost endless complication of duties, the multiplicity of little observances, the grateful enjoyment of mercies, the patient endurance of trials, the fulfilment, day by day and hour by hour, of the manifest duty of the day and hour,—are all concurring to that maturity of spiritual condition which is the end for which we live; every minutest thought we think, every slightest deed we do, every trivial word we speak, has its portion in preparing us for our everlasting destiny. And thus, while on the one hand every proud, and revengeful, and uncharitable thought; every slight breach of truth, of honour, of honesty, of reverence; every petty act of fraud, of falsehood, of unkindness, and irreverence; and much more, every larger and more signal deed of wrong, is forwarding us in the accomplishments of Satan and his angels: so also, the man who is seeking to purify his soul by unfeigned love of truth; who lives an honest, manly, unaffected, useful life;

Digitized by Google

who cherishes all holy and spiritual affections; who seeks out every occasion, and makes the most of it, for deeds of mercy and love, from the large and costly charities which few can afford, to the small courtesies and little kindnesses which all can do; following quietly but stedfastly, and to the best of his ability, in the meek footsteps of his Saviour; that man is ripening for heaven, and is bringing himself, by the blessing of God, into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

As, then, we learn a lesson of perseverance from the *gradual* and *continuous* nature of our spiritual growth, and of patience and contented quietness of spirit from its silent and unobtrusive progress; so, my brethren, we learn the danger of little sins, from the fact that all things both great and small, important and unimportant, leave their indelible impress upon us for good or for evil. No sin, no fault, no infirmity, can be insignificant if viewed in this light. And yet how often do people say to themselves, "It cannot matter much if I neglect this little duty, if I indulge in this little sin; or (what is the same thing) if I permit myself this short suspension of spiritual growth and advancement;" for, of course, every neglect of duty, as well as every act of sin, is a suspension of spiritual growth, for no one can be growing in grace who is not doing right. And observe the great peril of this indulgence in little *licences;* this playing with little sins arises not only from the positive evil which accrues from the

Digitized by Google

stain of guilt upon the soul, but even still more from the permanent weakening of the character, through its tendency to *habitual* negligence. He who pleads for and excuses himself for slight omissions, is, we may be sure, in a downward course. His omissions are sure to accumulate, and as they become more frequent they produce less disquiet, the conscience grows blunter, and the heart harder. Let us, then, beware of little as well as great sins, of every, even the slightest, violation of law of conscience, and of every neglect of the opportunities afforded us for promoting our spiritual advancement. Remember, that every refusal to come to Christ in the way of obedience, will make your desire to come to Him in future less probable. To indulge in any presumptuous pause in your advancement is to run the risk of incurring a habit of sin, which will surely dwarf and render fruitless your spiritual life; and may subject you perhaps, at a moment when you least expect it, to the terrible sentence, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground!"

Seeing then, brethren, that we are all plants in the Lord's vineyard, placed there to grow and to ripen till the Lord of the harvest shall come to claim his own, let us see to it that we take all possible care to forward that inward process, by which we are to become meet to be gathered into the everlasting garner. Seek diligently to remove all that may hinder or impede the ripening and perfecting of your Christian character, and endeavour to cherish and

Digitized by Google

cultivate the graces and gifts which the Holy Spirit shall gradually bestow upon you. And amidst all your efforts, and whatever may be your success, whether your advance be rapid or slow, beware of being elated or unduly depressed; remembering that Christ's chiefest saint, the foremost of them all, said this: "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XIX.

## Inward Purification.

1 JOHN iii. 3.

*"And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*

WHAT, then, my brethren, is this hope of which St. John speaks, as implying the necessity of inward purification. On looking to the first verse of the chapter whence the text is taken, you will find the Apostle discoursing on a theme which of all others he loved to dwell on, viz., the marvellous depth of God's love, as manifested in His gifts of grace to the children of men. "Behold," he says, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" He sets before us our present position and calling in all their dignity, and, leading us to contrast them with our fallen condition by nature, would excite in us a fuller and more real appreciation of God's love and mercy. Strangers by nature to God, separated from Him by a great gulf which sin had placed between us, there was that within which made us unfit for, and utterly unable to endure, the presence of God; our inmost nature had become corrupt; the heart,

Digitized by Google

once pure in its affections, as it existed in Adam before the fall, had become tainted with sin, and the source being polluted the stream that flowed from it was polluted also, and fierce, rebellious passions and carnal desires were its natural productions. The human will, once in harmony with the Divine, and rejoicing in a loving and trustful obedience, had become perverted, and, with self-trusting pride delighted in rebellious opposition to the Divine law of holiness and truth. It had been impossible for such creatures to have reflected on a God of perfect holiness and purity without the most intense fear, and a full conviction that His Presence would be as a consuming fire to them. Powerless to purge their own hearts, and bring their wills into conformity with God's will; unable to find out any atonement for the long catalogue of their sins, to which every day and hour of their lives contributed; without any friend to plead their cause and intercede in their behalf, their condition would, indeed, be most miserable.

Now though these truths of which we have spoken are familar to our ears, and meet with a ready assent, yet it is well for us to have them set before us again and again, that our cold and forgetful hearts may be inflamed with gratitude for our deliverance; for we know, brethren, that, from that perilous and outcast condition in which we find ourselves by nature, we have been delivered. He that created man, and gave him the capacity and opportunity of serving Him and rendering Him the praise and homage of worship and

Digitized by Google

obedience, God, Who is all power and all holiness, has revealed Himself to man as a God of love. "God is love," says St. John. Love is of the very essence of His being; "and in this," says the same Apostle, "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Man could not staunch the wound which sin had inflicted on him, and which, but for the love of God manifested in the work of redemption, must have brought death to both body and soul. But the incarnation and death of Christ, the Son of God, has been applied to our souls; the Only-begotten of the Father has taken our nature, in addition to His Divine nature, that He might infuse into it that principle of holiness and purity which had been lost by Adam's sin.

In His person, my brethren, our fallen and degraded being has been restored to the original perfection in which it was created, and exalted even to far greater honour than was allotted to it in the garden of Eden,—for now it is united to the Deity itself, and the Son of God, clothed in our perfected and glorified human nature, is seated for ever at the right hand of His Father. And because He has thus suffered Himself to be brought into such close and intimate relationship to us, and has become the head of the whole human family,—the new Adam, from Whom we derive a new principle of life,—so our relationship to God the Father is changed, and privileges and gifts and titles, which amaze us by their



Digitized by Google

preciousness and honour, and seem too great for earthly beings, become ours for Christ's sake, Who has purchased us with His own blood, united us unto Himself, and reconciled us to His Father. To the natural man God is an object of fear and dread; the thought of his rebellious heart causes him to shrink from His presence; to the Christian He is the one object of his love and gratitude; through the mediation of Christ He becomes accessible to all His creatures, and the voice of prayer and praise and thanksgiving, ascending as sweet incense to the heavenly throne, are rendered acceptable by the intercession of our glorified Lord.

The natural man was bound hand and foot by the fetters of sin, and unable to burst them by any power of his own. Sold under sin, he could not free himself from its thraldom; but the spirit of Christ shed abroad in our hearts has destroyed the dominion of sin, has freed us from its power, and enabled us to become the servants of righteousness; for "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." So, again, the natural man was at enmity with God; his whole being was in a state of opposition to his Maker, tending to frustrate His designs concerning him; but, through union with Christ, the spirit of adoption has been shed abroad in our hearts,

Digitized by Google

and the fulness of God's love has overflowed towards us, and we are endowed with the title and privileges of sons. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Well, indeed, might St. John bid us reflect on the vastness of that love that could raise us to such a glorious position, could strengthen us for the fulfilment of its duties, and prepare us gradually for our future inheritance. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Such then, brethren, is the blessedness of our position as baptized members of Christ's body. By Christ's own appointed Sacrament of Baptism we have been made one with Him, and partaker of that Divine spiritual strength whereby we may live to God as obedient children. Our blessed Lord, be it remembered, is the source of all our spiritual life. He is not, indeed, present to our bodily eyes; we cannot witness any outward demonstrations of His power, nor can we hear words of counsel and encouragement from His lips; and yet, my brethren, for all that, we must believe that He is present to each one of us, in a manner as real, and more effectual, because in a spiritual manner. He is present in the heart of each one of us by His Spirit, if so be we have not driven Him from us by our sins. "Now if any man," says St. Paul, "have not the spirit of

Digitized by Google

Christ, he is none of His; and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." In Holy Baptism Christ binds us to Himself, and ever after He dwells within us, supplying our spiritual needs, and enabling us to do works of righteousness which shall be pleasing to God, and rendering us, by degrees, through the practice of well-doing, more and more acceptable to our heavenly Father. But though, indeed, it were a glorious privilege in this life to carry on a successful warfare against sin, both in our own hearts and in the world; though the peace of a good conscience would always be a sure reward of an earnest and hearty devotion to Christ; and the satisfaction of the highest and noblest feelings of our nature would result from the motives and objects that would be set before us; yet, if there were no prospect of ultimate deliverance from the constant struggles of an evil nature, no hope of the entire subjection of sin, and the final perfecting of the whole being, both body and soul, in a state of rest and joy, even the greatest and most valiant of God's saints might have fainted by the way, in the heat and toil of an endless strife. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." "But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Christ, risen and sitting at the right hand of His Father, in the very form of man, in which He as-

Digitized by Google

cended from the Mount of Olives, is the source of that lively hope, that well-grounded assurance, that His faithful followers, who have been closely united to Him in this life, and have drawn from Him grace and strength for the gradual purification of their nature, shall find their consummation and bliss both in body and soul in His heavenly kingdom. True it is, the precise nature of that blessedness which awaits the obedient sons of God has not been revealed to us. It were impossible for us to raise our weak and earth-bound faculties to the contemplation of such a scene. "It doth not," says St. John, "yet appear what we shall be;" and yet on one point he does give us information; "but we know," he goes on to say, "that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Here, then, is something definite on which we may fix our hope. An object set before us, not to stimulate us to vain and useless speculations, but to urge us on in the gradual work of restoration under Divine grace. When Christ shall appear to gather together His elect, all those who have diligently worked under His guidance, and suffered themselves to be moulded and shaped as He would have them, in this life, shall then be made like unto Him in all perfection.

Clearly then, my brethren, if this hope be the portion of every Christian, in proportion as we realize and value the object of our hope, in such proportion will be our diligence in striving to attain it. When reminded by God's providence of the time

Digitized by Google

which must come to all, when earthly hopes must vanish and come to nought, men's thoughts recur involuntarily to what they know to be the only sure and stedfast hope. At such times men are most ready to express that hope in words; to declare their trust in a merciful Saviour, to throw themselves unreservedly on His protection, and to dwell with confidence on the hope that they shall be amongst the blessed.

But, brethren, what shall we say of the assurance and value of such a hope, which only springs up when all other hopes are fled? The Christian's life, be it remembered, begins from his very baptism; and the Christian's hope is then set before him. Shall he quench that hope at the very outset, and with it all the earnest efforts towards inward purification it was intended to excite? Though he has been taught that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, and as such gifted with the sure hope of a glorious inheritance, shall he regard this solemn teaching as only so much barren knowledge, not intended to have any practical effect upon his conduct? Shall he grow up in a thoughtless, careless way, indulging as he pleases in the vices, the pleasures, and the various excitements of life? Shall he suffer his whole soul to be engrossed in scheming for the gratification of worldly hopes, surrendering his thoughts, his time, and his influence to selfish purposes, shewing most clearly that it is on earth that his affections are centred? and then, when

Digitized by Google

his appointed time has run out, and the objects of his earthly desires are passing into other hands, shall he dare with confidence to rest on that hope, which, though his during a whole life, has been constantly and deliberately despised?

My brethren, there is no state, be it ever so fearful, in which a man is forbidden to hope. The love of God is infinite, the merits of Christ are incalculable; but this must be said, that all well-grounded assurance, all fearful trust, must be denied to such an one, if he in any way realizes the depth of his iniquity; "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Be sure, my brethren, that this hope thus set before us is no mere vague sentiment, to which we may have recourse at certain times to excite in us pleasurable assurances of our own safety, and then dismiss it from our thoughts until some other convenient season arrives. This hope brings before us a great practical reality; nothing less, my brethren, than the perfecting of our whole being,—the restoration of the Divine image in which we were originally created. This is our hope, that when Christ shall appear, we shall rise to immortality made like unto Him, Who, as perfect Man without sin, exhibits in His own Person our nature, re-created in strength and holiness.

Here, then, is a great work set before us. Not until the resurrection, when the Spirit of Christ, which dwells in us, shall enable our mortal bodies

Digitized by Google

to shake off the trammels of death, and rise from the dust, shall the full perfecting of our nature be accomplished. And yet, during this life we must ever be advancing towards that end, the great object of our hope, or we prove that it has taken no real hold of us, and that our position as God's sons is lightly esteemed by us. "Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Most surely this must be the work of our lives, if we would profit by the hope that is our portion as God's children. We are no longer at liberty to follow the dictates of our own wills, and to spend our energies upon mere selfish gratification. Christ, my brethren, has made us His own, He has purchased us unto Himself, He has made us His servants, and as such has given us a work to do. That work consists in the gradual purification of our nature, under the operation of His indwelling Spirit. By the diligent practice of well-doing; by a constant and earnest opposition to the temptations of the world, the allurements of sin; by a determined choice to obey the voice of Christ in spite of every difficulty,—our wills, and our whole inward being, will by degrees be purified from sin, under the influence of the indwelling Spirit, and made more and more like unto Him who is our perfect Pattern.

This, my brethren, is the Christian's privilege, that he should work together with Christ; that through his union with Christ he should be enabled by Divine grace to contribute his own efforts to the accom-

Digitized by Google

plishment of the great purpose of our Blessed Lord's Incarnation.

Clearly then, my brethren, as it is only through our relationship by grace to Christ, through our having been made very members of His Body by incorporation into His Church, that we have obtained this precious hope of future perfection, and are emboldened to strive for it; so must it be only through that relationship that we are to obtain strength for so great a work. "There is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus;" through Him alone can we obtain Divine grace and aid. Christ, as Man, is the channel through which all Divine influences are transmitted to us, cleansing and healing our fallen nature. To Him, then, we must cleave, if we would desire to co-operate with Him; without Him, nothing that we do, however good it may seem in our eyes, can be acceptable to God. United to Him, and working in His strength, even our most feeble effort to cast out sin and to do righteousness, shall be pleasing to God for His sake. And as it is clearly our duty to seek to be united in ever-increasing nearness to Christ, and most diligently to beware of every sinful thought and act which may cloud the brightness of His Presence in our hearts; so, my brethren, we must be careful to preserve and strengthen that union, by the means which Christ Himself has appointed. It is not by inward thoughts and feelings, or any intellectual operation of the mind, that we

Digitized by Google

are to obtain the strengthening presence of Christ in our hearts. As it is by His coming in the form of man, and taking upon Him our flesh, that He has opened out a way by which Divine mercy and love may be applied to the healing of our souls; so is it by certain outward means of His own appointment, that He wills to convey to us that love and mercy in one continual stream. Placed as we are by Holy Baptism in His Church in which He dwells, and united to Him, we are at once brought under the healing influences of Divine grace, and made partakers of that spiritual life, which is in Christ in all its fulness.

In all the ordinances of His Church we draw nearer to His blessed Presence; but this is true in an especial way of the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. In this sacred ordinance we have set before us the special means by which He wills to communicate Himself to us; the special means by which He would impart to us the virtue of His Incarnation, the strengthening food by which He would support our fainting souls, and restore health to our whole inward being.

Brethren, if we have any sense of our infirmities, of our constant need of Divine strength to help us to gain the victory in the daily and hourly struggles with sin in which we are engaged; if we are sure that we are really earnest in our work, and have a conscience clear from the memory of unrepented sins, and from the presence of sins still indulged;

Digitized by Google

if we do really desire and feel our need of perpetual union with Christ; surely we can never too highly value that Holy Sacrament. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." "As the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

These, brethren, are most precious and solemn words, and shew us of how great blessedness we deprive ourselves by neglecting this Holy Sacrament. Without it we can have no spiritual life and strength; by worthy partaking of it, we are enabled to hold by Christ, and our inward sinfulness dies down and disappears. Earthly desires, inclinations, and thoughts will gradually be cast out; for the light of His Presence will be poured down in ever-increasing brightness, and raise and purify our hearts and affections, and fill us with love and an holy will.

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XX.

## The Means of Attaining to Increased Perfection.

ST. MATTHEW v. 48.

"*Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"

MY brethren, in drawing your attention to these words of our blessed Lord on Sunday last, I insisted on their general application to all Christian men and women without exception; and having shewed that the spiritual condition to which they refer is one towards which we ought all to be gradually progressing, I pointed out that the desire and longing after perfection is one chief means of reaching it; and that, if we are wise, we shall endeavour to fix and strengthen these good desires and holy aspirations, while our hearts are fresh and pure, and as yet unhardened by contact with an evil world.

Now, before we pass on to consider further the means which are most suitable for helping us to reach the high standard set before us, it will be well for us to be able to meet one or two difficulties which this text may suggest to our minds.

First, it may be said, is not a requirement here laid down which it is plainly beyond man's power

Digitized by Google

to fulfil? We are told to be perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect; and the words imply that this state of perfection is attainable in this life. But, continues the objector, consider what the Divine perfection is. It comprehends every intellectual and moral attribute, all wisdom, power, and goodness, in absolute, infinite, unlimited completeness; all of them inherent and self-existent in the Divine nature, and uncontrolled in their sphere of action, because independent of all relations of time and circumstance. How, then, can man, whilst burdened with the imperfections of the flesh, and subjected to the influences of a fallen world, how can he in this life reach the standard of absolute perfection as it exists in the Divine nature? My brethren, there is no truth which we need to impress on our minds more strongly than this, that God never requires impossibilities of His creatures. St. Paul cried out, in the vivid faith of a long experience of God's dealings with himself, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me;" and why? because he was convinced that God would never impose upon him any duty or trial beyond his power.

We may be sure, then, that this precept of our Lord does not refer to that absolute perfection which, in the nature of things, must be unattainable by man in this his earthly existence. The same Apostle who exclaimed, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," also declared at the close of his career, "not as though I had already attained, either

Digitized by Google

were already perfect;" and, again, "I count not myself to have apprehended." Goodness in the Christian is but the image of that attribute in the Deity. Through the renewing and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, that image of God's perfect, absolute holiness and goodness is reflected in us; but during this life it must be subject to certain limitations and imperfections, owing to the circumstances in which we are placed. The more we desire to be holy, the more we long for that perfection which consists in the close and intimate knowledge and following of Christ, the more holy, the more perfect we shall become; but still, as we proceed in our ascent, still greater heights will open to our view, and whilst they will excite us to greater efforts, will remind us that during this life "patience must have her perfect work," since

> "*Now* we fight the battle, and *then* we wear the crown
> Of full, and everlasting, and passionless renown."

But, my brethren, although absolute perfection, as it exists in the Divine nature, is plainly an object of hope and not of enjoyment in this world, we are not therefore to think that these words of our Lord's are inapplicable to mankind in general, or that they are devoid of a definite meaning. Our Lord, when He laid it down as a precept of His Gospel, that all men ought to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect, did not use a strong expression merely to produce an effect; such a course would have been

Digitized by Google

inconsistent with His character as a Divine teacher. When He bid us be perfect, He certainly intended to teach us that there is a state of perfection to which we may attain in this life, although it is not that state of absolute perfection which belongs to the Divine nature.

Nor is it difficult to see how this may be, if we bear in mind that perfection does not necessarily imply the idea of completeness, or of having attained its ultimate end in everything. For, clearly a thing may be perfect in one respect, and not perfect in another. A child may possess every quality, whether of mind or body, which we are accustomed to regard as most becoming and most suitable to a child, and so we may say it is a perfect child, but yet we know that all we value in the child is about to develope and increase with its years; in other words, it has not attained the completeness of which its nature as a human being is capable of.

The perfection, therefore, which our Lord enforces upon us, is that degree of completeness of all that belongs to our spiritual and moral being which our nature is capable of in this life. It is, you will observe, a relative perfection; a perfection, that is, that has reference to the circumstances of our nature, and the limited sphere to which God has appointed us. God knows far better than we do the difficulties under which we labour, owing to the burden of the flesh which must more or less impede our heavenward progress. He knows all the circumstances

Digitized by Google

attending this our mortal state, which limit our spiritual capacity, and render impossible in this world the full and complete development of our spiritual being. But He knows also what we are capable of; He knows how our fallen nature has been renewed and built up by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost; He knows that His only Son has shewn us the reflection of the Divine holiness; living here on earth, and exhibiting all the graces and virtues of the perfect man amid the distractions and trials of a life of suffering.

Whilst, therefore, He sets before us a perfect pattern, to which our whole nature shall be entirely conformed in the next world, He requires of us now to strive after the highest degree and measure of completeness in all the graces of the Christian character, of which our nature in this life is capable; or in other words, He bids us be perfect in our finite and limited nature, even as He is perfect in His Divine and infinite nature; He tells us that in the appointed sphere of action to which He has called us, limited though it be, His will is not to be partially but absolutely fulfilled, so that the God of peace may even in this life "sanctify us wholly."

And now, brethren, turning to the means by which we are to make progress in this great work of our lives, you will remember that I pointed out an ardent desire and longing after increasing holiness as the first requisite for placing ourselves in the path of spiritual improvement. The grace of God's Holy

Digitized by Google

Spirit co-operates with us, helping our infirmities, supplying all our needs, and furthering every effort, but it will not constrain us to act contrary to our will. It will not overrule our fixed determination. We must choose for ourselves who our Master shall be, and then in the difficulties which beset our obedience we shall find abundance of help. But I am now led further to remark, that it is not every sort of desire that will suffice to urge us on in the path of spiritual perfection. There are desires which end in themselves, and never pass on into anything more definite and efficacious. Listless longings after a higher and a purer state, unaccompanied with any fixed resolve, or active exertion. Such desires as these do more harm than good; they enfeeble and enervate our spiritual nature; men spend themselves in desiring instead of acting, and they rest upon these desires as a satisfactory indication of their spiritual condition. Such desires as these are powerless and illusory. You will talk to such men, and they will assent to all you say, and seem to have an appreciation of all that is good and pure in the Christian character, and you will imagine that they really desire to improve; but because there is no real ardour in their desires, their natural indolence gets the better of them, and they fail to take any means to put their desires into execution.

Our desires, to be of any avail, must pass into firm resolutions and definite intentions. We know well the difference between wishing or desiring, and re-



Digitized by Google

solving in matters of this world. We know that the one leaves the object of our search as far distant as ever from us, whilst the other seldom fails in reaching it. We know what sort of opinion we are accustomed to form of a man who is always complaining of his lot, blaming his circumstances as the cause of his failure, and yet taking no active means to mend his condition. We do not hesitate to condemn him at once as an irresolute, mean-spirited person, who is never likely to succeed in any undertaking, and on whom our help is almost wasted. Do not let us think that it can be different in things spiritual. Our moral nature is put on trial in both cases alike, and as sure as the faint-hearted, irresolute man fails in attaining success in the material things of this world, so will he also fail with regard to the spiritual treasures of the world to come. We must first shake off the indolence which invites excuses for inactivity. For I am supposing that we are convinced that we are at the commencement of a serious work, attended with many difficulties,—that we are aware that to attain the graces of the Christian character in that perfection of which God has made us each capable, in spite of the seductions of the world and the machinations of our spiritual enemies, is a work which cannot be done for us, but must be carried out each man for himself. And I say, then, that the point of greatest importance in most cases is, to overcome and cast aside the spirit of indolence, which hinders our good desires from passing into

Digitized by Google

efficacious resolutions, and prevents the will from actively exerting itself.

I know, my brethren, that there are vast numbers of professing Christians, it may be there are some amongst ourselves to whom it is useless to speak of indolence as an obstacle to their spiritual progress, because they have not yet learned to acknowledge the necessity of their being different from what they are. They are content to rest their salvation on a bare and literal compliance with the Ten Commandments. They do not think it needful to rise above the letter, or to extend their examination into their inner and comprehensive spirit. They never permit themselves to be lowered in the estimation of their fellows by any flagrant or open breach of the moral law. They are ever careful to attend to such religious duties and observances as are sanctioned by the love of society in which they move; they are ready to give of their substance, when to withhold it would render them singular in the eyes of their companions; but never having realized the beauty of true holiness; never having cared for, and still less cultivated, the *graces* of the Christian character as revealed by our Lord;—having received the grace of God in their baptism, but never having obeyed its impulses, or sought its help,—they cannot understand you when you accuse them of indolence in the pursuit of Christian perfection. What, they would ask, what would you require of us? *We* are not as other men are—we are not extortioners, un-

Digitized by Google

just, or adulterers; we are not even like those penitents whom you receive so eagerly, and of whom you have such good hope; we comply with all the requirements of your law, which the society in which we live has agreed to enforce and to sanction, and in this we are content to rest our claim to the favour of God and man.

My brethren, as these words die away upon our lips, does not the emphatic warning of our blessed Lord involuntarily take their place, and force us to exclaim, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

To speak to such men of indolence in their Christian calling is to throw away words, because they have not yet realized the importance of the object which you wish them to gain. They must first be taught to know themselves, and to view themselves and their daily conduct in the light of Gospel truth, as revealed to us by our blessed Lord. But, I address myself now to those who, through the grace of God, have become sensible of their own imperfect spiritual condition, compared with what they know it ought to be, and are more or less desirous of improvement. I tell *them* that indolence is the one chief obstacle which keeps them back. They desire, but they are afraid to resolve, lest they should then feel bound to act. They will talk about improvement, they will lament their many imperfections, their hasty ungovernable tempers, their undue licence of

Digitized by Google

speech, their want of thoughtfulness and consideration for others, their self-love and their self-will; but they cannot be brought to resolve on their knees before God to take the right means for rooting out these imperfections, because they know it must be a hard task, a task hard in proportion to the duration or inveteracy of the evil habits; and so they shrink back and shelter themselves under some one or other of the innumerable excuses which their deceitful hearts are ever ready to suggest. And what excuse more plausible and more common than this, that their circumstances are to blame and not themselves. That it is impossible for a man who is actively engaged in daily employment to find time for serious thought and reflection; that the society into which he is thrown, the conversation he is forced to hear, and the conduct he is obliged to witness, are sufficient of themselves to prevent him from carrying out any stricter rules of living in his own case.

My brethren, I believe that though this excuse is oftentimes, and perhaps generally, a mere subterfuge, to induce a false peace and security, it is not unfrequently urged in all sincerity, as though it were a sufficient reason for inactivity in our spiritual improvement. And yet, brethren, surely its fallacy is at once shewn, if we call to mind that, provided our employment be lawful, it is not we who make it for ourselves, but God who calls us to it. The diligent, cheerful prosecution of our respective callings is

Digitized by Google

a high act of obedience to the will of God; and surely when He bids us *all* strive after a higher perfection, *all* walk in Christ's footsteps, *all grow* in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord; surely, I say, He cannot Himself have placed such an obstacle in our way as to render obedience in this respect an impossibility. No, brethren, we take a very low and degrading view of labour and all its attending circumstances, when we imagine that it is to hinder our Christian walk. Believe me, my brethren, each man's calling is the sphere of life in which he is required to *work* out, (mark, not to remain in a listless state of idle longing,) to "*work* out his salvation with fear and trembling." And why does the Apostle say with fear and trembling? why, for this very reason, because he knew that every man's life, in whatever sphere it may be cast, must be replete with temptation; that those temptations will of course differ, and assume different forms according to circumstances; but that temptations there must and will be in every state and condition of life, and that care and watchfulness, activity and diligence, springing from a lively apprehension of our danger, will be needed to ensure a gradual and safe progress in the difficult ascent of spiritual perfection.

If, then, this excuse has suggested itself to the minds of any who now hear me, I would implore them to open their eyes to its utter deceitfulness. If, brethren, you have any appreciation of the purer and higher gifts of the Christian character; if you have

Digitized by Google

learned to value self-content, unselfishness, humility, and the spirit of love and tenderness in others; if you have sometimes longed to pursue these graces in a higher measure yourselves; if perchance on your knees you have lamented your many infirmities before your Father which is in heaven, oh! do not rest satisfied with these desires; do not quench them with the thought that true holiness is unattainable because circumstances seem to throw difficulties in your way. Remember, it is the part of true courage to rise above difficulties, and to turn them into means for furthering your success. How often have poverty, and neglect, and utter loneliness, been the means of stimulating the dormant energies, and of carrying men on to the highest pinnacle of advancement in the various walks of life. A strong courage, a resolute will, and ardent aspirations, have enabled them to rise above the difficulties which surrounded them, and indeed, as I said before, to find in them the very stimulus to exertion.

Considering, then, the immeasurably greater importance of spiritual things as compared with temporal, let us not shrink from taking that course without which there can be no success or advancement in either one or the other. Let us no longer be content with empty desires, but pass on to a strong, active, constant resolution to set to work in earnest at our daily and hourly improvement in the graces of the Christian character. And yet, in so doing, beware how *you*, unconsciously perhaps, rely on your

Digitized by Google

own strength for carrying you through this work. Your only safeguard is in looking constantly to Christ, thinking and meditating on His life as your pattern, and on your membership with Him as your sure guarantee of help and strength. To Him must you offer up your resolutions on your knees, to Him you must devote yourself. From Him you must seek the strength which shall render your resolutions effectual, and to Him and His help must you attribute every step which you are enabled to take in the fulfilment of His own command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XXI.

## The Fear of Death.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

"*It is appointed unto men once to die.*"

THESE words express a truth known and acknowledged by all, that the whole human race, and every individual member of it, is subject to, must at some time or other be overcome by, the power of death. They refer us back to that critical moment in the history of our race, when our first parents, yielding to the seductions of the tempter, fell from this state of innocence and of unbroken dependence on the life-giving and life-sustaining Presence of God, and heard the terrible sentence proclaimed by the Voice of the Creator, as the punishment of His rebellious creatures, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The Apostle refers to this truth as one for which he might claim the universal assent of mankind; and on that assumption he proceeds to institute a comparison between the Death of Christ as an offering for sin, and our death as the penalty of sin.

I do not at the present moment intend to ex-

Digitized by Google

plain or enforce that comparison; but employing the Apostle's words as a statement of the truth of the universal and irresistible power of death, and claiming, as he does, your undoubted assent to it, as being grounded no less on reason and experience than on Revelation; I would ask you, is it a truth on which you have ever consciously and deliberately reflected? I do not enquire whether you know or believe this truth; but whilst the Advent warning is ringing in your ears, bidding you awake out of sleep, lest we be like unto them that dream, playing with and grasping at fleeting shadows of this life, instead of laying hold of the great realities of the life beyond the grave, I would ask whether by meditation and reflection you have endeavoured to realize this truth in its personal and individual application to *yourselves.* I have often reminded you (on former occasions) that by this means only can we impart freshness, and an influential power, to such generally admitted truths as the one we are now considering. The very fact that they are so familiar to us, and so indisputable, renders them liable to lie dormant within us, and thus entirely to lose their power of influencing us; so that instead of supplying principles and motives to guide and stimulate us in our daily life, they become reduced to mere formal statements, ever ready to fly to our lips, but powerless to affect our hearts.

It is most necessary, then, that we should ever and anon make such truths the subjects of special

Digitized by Google

meditation, that we may view them once more in all their living freshness and clearness, and by drawing out for ourselves, by the help of the Holy Spirit, the various considerations involved in them, may become conscious of their importance as bearing upon ourselves individually. It is not difficult to account for the general distaste for this habit of meditating on sacred truths, merely on the ground of carelessness and indifference to all spiritual matters; but there is a special reason in force with regard to the particular subject now before us, affecting not only the careless and the indifferent, but even the serious and devout,—I mean the natural shrinking from death, arising from an instinctive fear and dread of it, experienced more or less by all.

Let us, then, spend a few moments in considering the nature of this fear, and the causes on which it depends, that so we may ascertain whether there is any true wisdom or any real danger in driving the thought of death from us.

What, then, is the nature of this fear of which we speak? Is it a mere childish, unreasonable apprehension, without any real and definite cause? or is it a mere superstitious dread, which superior knowledge can at once remove? The universal experience of mankind teaches us that it is neither the one nor the other. However much reason, and—of course in a far higher degree—however much Revelation may control and regulate the fear of death, it does

Digitized by Google

not seem intended that they should be able entirely to extinguish it.

The first thought of death, and the first consciousness of its near approach, in all but perhaps the most perfect saints, have ever been attended with a certain degree of fear, and a conscious shrinking from the coming struggle. The Psalmist himself confessed to this infirmity of his nature, when he cried out, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." And though it is true that St. Paul could say, "I have a desire to depart," and that many who suffered martyrdom were so strengthened by supernatural grace as to be able to hail their last agonies with joy;—yet even under the cheering light of Gospel promises, the thought of death with Christians in general has ever been a thought of fear.

If, then, this fear be a real instinct of our nature, implanted in us by the Creator Himself, the Author and Giver of our life, and witnessed to by the universal experience of mankind, what are the causes to which it is to be referred? Why is it that the thought of death fills us with an involuntary dread, and affects our whole frames with fearfulness and trembling?

The causes are twofold: first, those which have reference to the body; secondly, those which have reference to the soul.

Digitized by Google

If, then, we regard death in reference to our bodily organism, what are the thoughts which immediately present themselves to our minds?

First, there is the thought of the pain which ordinarily attends the struggle with our last enemy, and of the whole process of decay, by which all our bodily powers and senses will one by one be gradually destroyed. All this is abhorrent to our nature, which instinctively clings to life as its most precious gift, and offers its most strenuous resistance to all that would attack or injure it. And thus we shrink from pain, and take every means in our power to remove it, because we know it is the symptom of approaching decay; that it is the sure sign by which our nature warns us that the enemy of our life is at work within us, carrying on his assault against the mysterious principle of our existence,—an assault which, however much it may be retarded by the appliances of art and science, must in the end prove successful.

Pain and suffering are no part of the creation of God: they are the consequences of sin; they could have found no entrance into our once pure and spotless nature. But when man, by his own wilfulness, became subject to death, pain and suffering took possession of him, that they might ever bear witness to its irresistible and inevitable approach. Pain, then, may be said to be the presence of death within us. And if so, what wonder that we are startled and terrified by it, seeing that it

Digitized by Google

reminds us of all the other evils that follow in his train. For pain leads on necessarily to gradual decay and corruption; it is only a question of time how soon it shall put forth its full power, and appear in its full array.

If, then, pain at all times must be a source of fear and trouble to us, how shall not the thought of those last agonies, which have at last wasted the very source of life, fill us with dismay? For *they* tell most clearly of the utter withering and corrupting of the body; *they* tell us of the utter prostration and speedy annihilation of our bodily senses and faculties, by which we take cognizance of all that we have most valued. To picture ourselves stretched on a bed of pain, helpless and motionless, losing by degrees the free use of our bodily and mental powers,—with palsied limbs, and clouded eyes, broken speech, unsteady thoughts and an impotent will; surely this sets before us a spectacle of such utter humiliation, that we may well shrink back from the thought of its being realized in our own persons.

But it is not only the thought of the pain we endure, and the humiliating condition to which we are reduced by death, that causes the fears of which we speak; but also the thought of the separation from all that has made life dear to us, that must necessarily ensue from its victory over us.

Now we can see at once how forcibly this applies to the case of the mere worldling, who has never

Digitized by Google

ceased to set his affections on things below, or ceased to entertain any hopes and longings beyond the range of earthly objects. "The remembrance of death must indeed be bitter to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions,—unto the man that hath prosperity in all things, and hath nothing to vex him."

The relinquishment of riches, and honours, and ambitious schemes, and the objects of mere sensual gratification must of course seem like utter desolation to a careless, sensual, and worldly man. He has nothing to look forward to in exchange for what is being wrenched from his grasp, save a "fearful looking for of judgment." He indeed may well be overwhelmed with a horrible dread, when he reflects that in losing his earthly sources of pleasure and excitement he is losing all, seeing that he is passing into a state in which the only objects he could delight in will have no existence, and the only occupations he cared for will cease to be possible.

But even the devout and heavenly minded, although set free from all such undue attachment to the world, will not be unaffected by the consideration they will feel that death must be the end of many pure and blessed enjoyments to them; and that it will sever them from many objects in which it was lawful for them to delight. Though we live in a fallen world, far different from what it was when it came forth from the hand of the Creator, yet in mercy much that is beautiful has been spared,

Digitized by Google

as the faint reflection of the perfections and glory of the Creator from Whom they spring. The beauties and the wonders of outward nature are a source of the keenest and purest delight. It is that we are so familiar with them, that we hardly realize how largely they contribute to our happiness, until we bring our minds to dwell on our forcible separation from them. But when the dark shadows of death are closing around us, and the stillness of the grave is awaiting us, then the recollection of those enjoyments will hardly fail to be present to us; and the thought that we shall no longer behold the sun, breathe the fresh air of heaven, hear the song of birds, or hearken to the voice of human speech, can scarcely fail to be one of sorrow and regret. Add to this the severance of all those ties which make life so sweet to us,—the relationships, the friendships, the companionships in which we hold more or less intimate communion and intercourse with each other, in which we have taken part in so many acts of common interest, and through which we have been bound to each other by the bonds of a pure and enduring affection; and we shall hardly wonder that even the devout and faithful Christian, should shrink from the thought of death as being the end of so many pure and blessed enjoyments.

If, then, we think of death merely in its relation to the body, we find that there are very sufficient causes for the existence of the fear of death, even in the case of those who are supported and con-

Digitized by Google

soled by the promises and hopes of the Gospel. But there are additional and still stronger causes for this fear, when we think of our souls. Death is the violent rending of soul and body. True, it cannot do any injury to the soul; that is beyond the power even of our last enemy.

But having subdued the powers of life, it can compel the soul to quit its earthly tabernacle. And whither then does it wing its flight? No longer present on earth, whither is it gone? Whilst sorrowing relatives and friends are still lamenting over the dead body, the soul is already before the tribunal of its Judge. Most truly it has been said, that the hour of our death is the hour of judgment. In that very condition in which our soul is at the moment of its departure from the body, in that very condition it will at once appear before the presence of God. Illuminated by the light of eternity, embracing at one glance the extent of its obligations, all the consequences of the graces it received, and all the circumstances of the sins it committed, it will stand before the Divine presence. "In Thy light we shall see light." There will be no escape from that awful spectacle, whether it be the worldling, or the sensualist, or the careless man, or the perfected saint,—the soul of each shall have to endure the sight of that mystery before which the beloved disciple fell as dead, the visible presence of the Word made flesh, the uncreated splendour of the Godhead.



Digitized by Google

And is there nothing, my dear friends, in all this to excite fear and awe within us? Is it not an awful thought, that all is over, and beyond the reach and possibility of change? That the judgment upon the soul is passed and recorded before God? That we have had our time and our trial, and that for weal or for woe our condition is then determined for ever? And with that thought, that death is judgment, does there not come the appalling consciousness that we may be found at the last unprepared to meet it? Who can be sure that he will have so lived as to be able to endure the searching to which his heart and conscience will then be subjected? All we know is, that death is the echo of life. As we have lived, so we shall die; and as we die, so we shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Most true it is that whatever degree of holiness and perfection we bring before the Judge, His merits only who died for us can render us acceptable, and to Him only and to His sacrifice we must look for safety.

But though this is most true as a general statement, the question will surely force itself upon us in the dark hour of approaching death, How far does this apply to myself individually? Where are the tokens and signs of my possessing this real and saving faith, whereby the righteousness of Christ becomes my portion, and His holiness the strength of my confidence?

Forms of speech and religious phrases, however

Digitized by Google

theologically correct, will not be sufficient for our comfort when we are going forth into the immediate presence of God. Mere expressions of faith and trust will surely seem unreal to the awakened conscience, when it knows that before a few hours, or maybe a few minutes have passed, its whole burden of remembered and unremembered sin must be laid bare before the all-pure and holy God. Involuntarily we shall test our right and title to such expressions by the tenor of our past life. We shall feel that as obedience is the only cognisable form of faith, so it is the only sign by which we can assure ourselves that we have believed, and are believing to our salvation. And hence it arises that the sense of personal sinfulness, and of utter unworthiness of the love and mercy of God, enters so largely into that feeling of fear, which the thought of death produces in us. For if we apply this test to ourselves, even the very best of us, how few can say that their faith has shewn itself in a consistent course of holy obedience? How few can look back upon childhood, boyhood, youth, and manhood, without shuddering at the thought that all and everything must be revealed. Who cannot but fear that, when seen in the light of God's presence, the picture of his life will be far different from what he had ever realized to himself? Who will not be conscious that his memory has dealt treacherously with him, in letting slip numberless sins unheeded and unrepented, only to be recalled by

Digitized by Google

the presence of the Lord? Who, in fact, will not mistrust his own estimate of himself, when he is about to meet the eyes of God and His holy angels? Who will not shrink back with fear from that awful meeting, lest after all he may not have attained?

Sufficient perhaps has been said, to shew you that there are real and just causes for that feeling of apprehension and dread with which the thought of death, when first realized, fills us. Those causes are partly dependent on the instincts and sympathies of our nature; partly on what has been revealed to us. And as death affects both the body and the soul, so the reasons for our fear of its approach are derived from considerations having reference both to the one and the other. Shall we then suffer this fear to deter us from reflecting on death? Shall we allow it so to take possession of us, as to induce us to drive the thought of our latter end from our minds? or, on the other hand, shall we affect to despise such a feeling, as unworthy of a Christian, and encourage ourselves to think of death as though it could have no terrors for those who had called upon Christ, and professed His faith.

My friends, there is no real wisdom in either course, however soothing it may be to us at the present time. To shun the thought of death because we fear it, is to incur the risk of becoming gradually insensible to its real importance; of finding ourselves unprepared to meet death when it comes;

Digitized by Google

and to ensure our being either overwhelmed by the fear of its approach, or utterly regardless of its consequences. Either the whole being will be filled with such an overpowering dread of the king of terrors presenting himself before the mind for the first time in all the fulness of his strength, as to be unable to turn for comfort to Christ and His promises; or the mind and the conscience will be steeped in such entire insensibility to all future consequences, that no warnings will suffice to rouse it to prepare for eternity.

Nor is there any real wisdom, but rather much danger, in affecting to despise this fear of death, as though there were any for whom it need not be fearful. To overcome this fear in the path of duty is true Christian courage; to controul it by the hopes and promises of the Gospel is genuine faith; but to despise this feeling, and to indulge in high thoughts and exulting aspirations, as though there were nothing awful in meeting Christ, and beholding the all-pure and holy God,—this, my friends, is dangerous presumption. Let us, then, take the wiser course, and avoiding both extremes, turn this feeling to good account, by cherishing it as a stimulus to earnest preparation for our last passage. Let the thought that death is indeed and in truth fearful to all, impel us to live in such constant readiness and expectation of it, that when it does draw near, we may not be utterly startled or overwhelmed by its terrors. Let it be present to us in our confessions,

Digitized by Google

that so they may be more pure and humble; let it be present with us in our prayers, that so they may be more earnest; and in our seasons of repentance, that so they may be more perfect and fervent. Thus during life, having endeavoured to realize our faith in active obedience, in our death we shall be able to realize Christ as our Saviour, and His spotless sacrifice as our perfect atonement; and though our conscience even then may accuse us, we shall not be without confidence and trust, seeing that "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things."

"Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XXII.

## Preparation for Death.

AMOS iv. 12.

*"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"*

THESE few but solemn words form part of an address delivered by Divine authority to the Jews, under the following circumstances. The kingdom, as we know, after the death of Solomon, was divided into two parts, and thenceforth becoming two states, the one was called the kingdom of Israel, and the other that of Judah. The kings of Israel were, with few (if any) exceptions, given to idolatry, and in other respects too like their founder, the usurper Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Nevertheless some of them were powerful and successful monarchs, among whom may be particularly mentioned Jeroboam the Second, who, in his wars with the Syrians, prevailed against them, and recovered Damascus and other ancient long-lost possessions of the Israelites. With this success, no doubt, he and his subjects were much elated; but it does not appear that they were at all the more inclined to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or to acknowledge their own

Digitized by Google

past sinfulness with true penitence and resolutions of amendment.

At this time, to warn them of their danger, and of the ruin that awaited them without timely repentance, God sent to them two of His messengers the prophets,—if so be they would listen, before it should be too late, to the voice of Mercy. These two prophets were Hosea and Amos. The writings of these holy men have been preserved to us, and they contain abundant and awful proof of the dreadful corruptions into which the Israelites of that time had fallen; proof, also, no less decisive and awful, if any were wanting, of the dreadful indignation of God against those who despise His warnings, His goodness, His forbearance and long-suffering.

With respect to the prophet Amos, it appears that he was specially called out of the land of Judah to prophesy to Israel, and that he fulfilled his commission with the most heroic courage, delivering his warnings at Bethel itself, the chief place of Israelitish idolatry. He, indeed, as was the case with most of the prophets, was commissioned to utter the Divine counsels, not merely as they respected His own nation of the Jews, but other nations also, the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries and cities. Yet though his warnings are severe against those countries, it is against Israel that his most indignant threatenings are denounced, for their forgetfulness of their God, and their oppression of one another. And then, in the fourth chapter, he proceeds to men-

Digitized by Google

tion the different judgments, which one after another God had sent on them; famine and want of bread, then want of rain and water, then blasting and mildew, pestilence and war. And then he refers to some awful destruction by fire from heaven, or perhaps lightning, the particulars of which have not been recorded. But something of the kind seems to be certainly implied in these words: "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord." And then, since all had been in vain, and not even these awful judgments could move their stony hearts, He seems to say that nothing more could be done,—their destruction, as a nation, was unavoidable. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" i.e. prepare thyself, if penitent, to meet Him with supplications, prayers, and tears; but if still hardened and impenitent, to encounter His just vengeance and fiery indignation. But, at all events, whether penitent or impenitent, grieved or hardened, "prepare, O Israel, to meet thy God;" still *Thy* God, though thou hast disowned Him.

Now, whatever might be the condition and conduct of those Israelites, it cannot, I suppose, be imagined by any person of the least consideration, that such a warning as this is less applicable, or less necessary for us than it was for them. For,

Digitized by Google

like them, we have received warnings and notices in abundance of what we are to expect; like them, too, alas! we have too many of us oftentimes disregarded those warnings, and gone every one his own way. And yet, brethren, meet our God we must, prepared or unprepared; and surely it were far better to meet Him now with sorrow, shame, and sincere endeavour after amendment, than to meet Him hereafter in the day of His wrath, and when the door of mercy shall be for ever closed. As Christians, then, immortal spirits redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, placed here for a little space on our passage and trial for eternity,—*preparation* is our business, and our only business; preparation, that is, for the great changes which are drawing on upon us, and of which we must all soon be witnesses; but whether in joy or sorrow, in hope or in despair, it is left to ourselves to determine.

Now religious preparation implies in it, at least, these three things,—serious forethought, actual search and enquiry, and a resolute course of practice suitable to what appears to be the truth of our condition with respect to the future. Without these, it is vain to flatter ourselves that we are preparing to meet our God.

Now, as to the first of these, no thoughtful person can deny or question the reasonableness, or rather the necessity, of serious forethought and anxiety about what end we are coming to. For as the great distinguishing mark which at present sepa-

Digitized by Google

rates us from the beasts that perish, is the power of exercising reason and reflection; so is this power in nothing more wonderfully shewn, than in our being capable of looking forward and ascertaining, with a considerable degree of certainty, what will be the consequences of our conduct, both on this side the grave and beyond it. The mind, indeed, when left to itself, naturally stretches its views onward; but the prospect being very often alarming, or, at least, doubtful and perplexing, the generality of people do not like to dwell on it. And this is one great reason why people, according to their different dispositions, fall into the opposite habits of covetousness or extravagance. One devotes himself to business and money-getting, another to pleasure and enjoyment; the course of conduct is as different as may be, but the principle will be found to be much the same, viz., a strong aversion and dislike to look seriously forward to our condition in the eternal world. If any proof were wanting of the extreme corruption of our nature, this alone would be but too decisive.

Nevertheless, however great and pitiable our frailty may be, the path of duty, in this as in other respects, is plainly marked out for us; and if we wilfully desert that path, we must be left without excuse. Not that I would say that in all particulars of every-day conduct it is easy to declare positively how one ought to act; but as a general rule, it may be asserted, that if a person does not live in constant forethought and anxiety about his eternal state,

Digitized by Google

he must somehow or other be going wrong. And this forethought and anxiety, if it be sincere, and at all proportionate to the importance of the subject, will lead us to search also and enquire what our prospects really are, what promises and threatenings are before us to be fulfilled in eternity, and in what degree our conduct at present may produce effects to be felt for good or evil, hereafter, for ever.

Nor must it be merely with reference to the world in general that we make this search and enquiry, but to ourselves, each one of us. For it is only so far as we consider religion a personal thing, a matter which infinitely concerns our own selves, each one of us, that we can make a due estimate of its unspeakable value. For this reason, it is so necessary that time should be spent, and attention bestowed, in closely examining what may be called the accounts of our souls. No day or season can be unfit for this holy and absolutely indispensable work; and yet there are times when we are with more than usual clearness excited to be diligent in it. Every week we are called to it on that sacred day, which even the tyrannical world allows us to consecrate to the memory of our Lord's Resurrection. But the sacred seasons, such as Advent, on which we have just entered, in preparation for Christmas; and Lent in preparation for Easter; and our more solemn examinations of ourselves before receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—are occasions which claim from us especial carefulness in this most ne-

Digitized by Google

cessary work; but there are others also, when God's presence amongst us makes itself felt with a more than usual and awful distinctness; when the Almighty Father sees fit to manifest His power in some marked visitation, and to excite a whole people to more serious recollection and repentance. Such an occasion, my brethren, surely is the present, when we are visited by a mysterious and dangerous sickness, by the fatal influence of which so many of our brethren have been laid low, and passed away with awful suddenness to meet their God. At such a time as this, especially, it is necessary for us to take particular account of the state of our souls, and to ascertain what hope we are really authorized to cherish, of our being at present in favour with our God, and our being ready to meet Him when He comes to judge both quick and dead. And yet from different causes, so many taking for granted that they are walking in the straight and narrow path, and so many, like Gallio, "caring for none of those things," enquiries of this kind really employ very little of people's time and attention. And even of those who are more sincerely and seriously disposed, too many have suffered their minds to be perplexed with unedifying questions, and even have come to imagine, that perhaps, after all, men will not be rewarded or punished according to their works, but by some other rule laid up in the secret counsels of the Almighty. And the natural consequence of this is, (just what the great enemy in-

Digitized by Google

tends when he lays a snare,) that so many who make a good beginning in the ways of religion and holiness, afterwards become either over-confident, or else cold and indifferent; but in either case are moved away (as St. Paul says) from the simplicity which is in Christ; and so, too often, instead of adorning, they disgrace the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Being, then, in such danger of falling, it is the more needful we should watch ourselves very narrowly, and with the utmost suspicion. For it is only by this constant, close attention that we can obtain that knowledge of ourselves, and of our spiritual condition, which is necessary for us, if we would indeed be prepared to meet our God. But for this blessed purpose, we must not only use ourselves to serious forethought, and actual search and enquiry, but also we must resolutely maintain a course of practice suitable to the prospect which is before us.

We are well aware, that at no great distance of time, and even *that* completely uncertain, we must have done with everything here; and the place where we are, as the Psalmist says, "shall know us no more." We are also assured, that at some future day, which how near it may be, or how far off, is purposely kept a secret from us, we each of us in our own persons shall be summoned before God's judgment-seat, to give account for our own works, of the deeds done in the body, i.e. of the way in which we have passed this our life of mortality. We

Digitized by Google

are further assured, that the Judge before whose tribunal we shall then appear, will be One whose name we have often heard, often repeated, either in reverence, or in thoughtlessness, or blasphemy; Who, having before shewn His infinite love by coming to die for us, will then shew His justice, power, and majesty, also infinite, when He comes to be our Judge. We are also warned, not by Scripture only, but by every day's experience, of the conduct of those who are called Christians, and who have been baptized into the sacred Name of the Lord Jesus Christ,—we are abundantly warned, I say, that it is now in our power, in any way, and in any degree, to scorn, neglect, and disregard the declared will of our Redeemer. This is plain and unquestionable. For many things, which He has most expressly and repeatedly forbidden, are openly and avowedly practised among all orders and degrees of Christians. And that heavenly disposition, which He most solemnly enjoins on all His disciples as what He expects of them,—a disposition made up of purity, meekness, love, and deadness to this world's things, —to say that this is the prevailing disposition among Christians, even among such as are more seriously disposed, would argue either a great ignorance of the way in which people are going on, or, what is worse, a dangerous and mistaken estimate of that evangelical perfection, to which our profession obliges us to aspire. Yet, whatever lives we choose to lead, however careless, however neglectful of God, and

Digitized by Google

forgetful of eternity, still we know that at the last we must be called to account, we must "meet our God." Nor is there any way of preparing ourselves for that awful hour, but by keeping it in mind from day to day, and ever living with a view to it.

As the Blood of Christ Jesus is all our hope and dependence, so His will must be all our rule and guidance; and let us take good heed, lest while we profess faith in His Blood, we forget or neglect His will. We cannot suppose, if we turn our thoughts to the subject with any seriousness, that in the day of His terror He will receive us as good and faithful servants, if we have not made it the business of our lives to *be* good and faithful; i.e. always, and in all circumstances, to endeavour to act in such a way as we think will be most likely to please Him. This, and nothing else but this, is the duty of a good and faithful servant; and if this is not actually and really our course of life, we are not preparing ourselves to meet our God. But I would ask you, my brethren, can we have any reasonable hope or comfort in our hearts, if we are leading an unprepared life? Do we consider what this is, or what it will end in? To say that we are no worse than other people, or that we have done many right things, or that we feel satisfied in our consciences, and are not afraid to die; all this is nothing,—nothing to trust to, or depend on; and we are all aware in our hearts that it is so; that there is nothing solid in such foundations as these, on which to build our hopes of eter-

Digitized by Google

nity. Or, again, if we say that we are not yet quite prepared to meet our God, but we mean to be before He calls us; what, has He not called us already? Is He not giving us, every one of us, daily, hourly warnings? And do we expect that He will work miracles to convert us, that He will force us to heaven, whether we will or no? Where is there any encouragement given in Scripture to any such imagination as this? And if the Gospel of mercy does not encourage us in cherishing it, what else are we trusting to? My brethren, it is often spoken of as a sad thing for Christians to be cut off unexpectedly, to be called unprepared to meet their God; and no doubt it is a sad and a fearful thought; but did it ever occur to you, that it is no less fearful for men to venture *to live* unprepared, to lead any kind of life but one of thorough unreserved devotion; any kind of life, in short, unworthy of angels and immortal spirits, sojourning here indeed for a little while on earth, but speedily to be called away to the presence of their Father in heaven. These are reflections which it concerns us all equally, and not one more than another, to keep deeply impressed on our hearts; and may Almighty God, of His infinite mercy, enable us so to do, more than we have ever yet done, even the best of us. For when "once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say



Digitized by Google

unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." "Take ye heed, then, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

Digitized by Google

# SERMON XXIII.[a]

## Casting our Care upon God.

1 ST. PETER v. 7.

"*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.*"

FEW precepts are of more universal application than this one which I have just read to you from the Epistle for the day. Look throughout the length and breadth of the land, at all classes, whether rich or poor, high or low, and where will you find the man or woman entirely free from the burden of care? We all know what an amount of positive suffering there is springing from various causes, which seldom fails to be the source of anxiety and care; how poverty, sickness, pain, and heavy bereavements will tend to disquiet the heart, and rob it of its rest and peace. Ever since sin entered into the world it has been so; for sin brought with it a long catalogue of evils, which have poisoned the stream of life, and have weighed down the hearts and souls of men.

But apart from the heavier calamities which oppress men with anxious care, consider all the minor evils which beset us in our daily life, the crosses and

[a] The last Sermon preached before his death.

Digitized by Google

disappointments, the harassing duties of our calling, the burden of responsibility, the jealousies, the evil tempers, the opposition of those with whom our lot is cast,—all these are of themselves fruitful sources of careworn faces and anxious hearts. Nor is it any one particular class of persons that feels the oppressive weight of care; whatever may be his condition, his position in society, his means, or his employment, a man cannot escape from care; neither riches nor high station, neither strong health nor the honest sense of enjoyment, will purchase exemption from it in some form or other. Take a few specimens of the various classes of men we see around us. Look at the man of business, who wearies himself day and night in the round of gain; he may preserve an external cheerfulness, and wear a smile upon his face, but if you could read the inner life of such a man, you would find his mind wound up to an incessant and unrelieved stretch, which is ever at the highest pitch; you would find an anxious heart brooding over disappointments, irritated by rivalries, ever fearful of some sudden failure, and, it may be, foreseeing for some time before, the fall, which brings ruin to himself, but no pity from those around him. Who shall say that there is no care and anxiety here? Or take the case of those who lay themselves out to secure to themselves the greatest amount of happiness in this life,—who make that their end and aim. I am not speaking of sensualists, or the mere heartless follower of

Digitized by Google

a life of dissipation, but of those who hold that they may legitimately make their own individual happiness the chief end of their existence; they avoid everything that is distasteful to them, or that seems in any way to interrupt the even tenor of their life, all that jars upon their feelings, all that fatigues or exhausts their energies; they shrink from responsibility, and excuse themselves from duties; they desire to pass their life in one prolonged and uninterrupted course of ease and enjoyment, and are ever on the watch to put aside every source of irritation and annoyance: and yet you will not live with them long before you will discover that they have been labouring in vain; and many a fretful hour, and many a season of depression, will bear witness to the anxieties and cares which no skill and watchfulness on their parts have been able to arrest.

Hitherto we have spoken of those who, although influenced more or less by Christian principles, yet have not risen to any full and adequate sense of their position as baptized members of Christ's family. But let us go on to consider the case of those regenerate children of God, who realize in all their fulness the privileges and blessings which surround them in the Church of Christ, and who are ever striving, amid the duties and occupations of their daily life, to carry on the work of their own sanctification. Do we find that they are more free from the sources of care and anxiety than others? Surely

Digitized by Google

not: on the contrary, they are liable to a still greater weight of care; for they have taken up their cross and followed Christ, and in doing so they have experienced many a spiritual care and anxiety, in addition to the ordinary cares which are the lot of all alike. If you read the lives of the saints, you will find that devotion to Christ and His service, and a faithful adherence to the principles and precepts of His Gospel, have not lessened the sources of inward disquiet; for the humbling sense of their own infirmities, combined with their high estimate of that Christian perfection to which they seek to attain, is a fruitful source of disappointment to them, and not unfrequently tends to sadden their hearts, and make them anxious for the future. It is God's will, that in the spiritual as in the natural life, we should be subjected to many an anxious care, even when we are honestly and faithfully striving to profit by all the assistances which He provides for us so plenteously. Seasons of spiritual depression there will be, when the dew of God's refreshing grace would seem to be withheld, and the heart, parched and dry, seeks earnestly, but cannot realize the consoling Presence of its Divine Master; times when doubts and misgivings will invade the soul, and, it may be, tempt it even to distrust its own salvation: times when all is dark and dreary, and the peace and rest of an assured heart, leaning in humble confidence upon its Lord, are exchanged for a troubled spirit, for weariness, perplexity, and

Digitized by Google

apprehension,—when a cloud has passed between Christ and the soul, and God has seemed to hide His face in anger, and the most earnest desires of our heart have failed to find expression in our prayers, because the gate of heaven seemed to be closed, and our petitions to return unanswered and unheard.

Yes, my brethren, we may try to cheat ourselves into the belief that this world will supply rest to our souls, and allow us to glide down the stream of life in one continual calm and sunshine; but experience soon disenchants us of the bright picture, as the hard realities of life pass before us, casting the dark shadow of care upon the soul. And then, when we have realized the fact that anxieties and cares are the lot of all, then it is that the words of the text come home to us in all their consoling power; for in them we learn the true secret by which those cares and anxieties may be rendered powerless to rob us of our inward peace of mind, by casting all our cares upon Him who has said, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you." To escape the cares and anxieties of life is indeed impossible; they form part of that probation which is the end and object of our present existence; but to free ourselves from the oppressive weight by which those cares would cast us down, is not impossible. Sorrows and disappointments, and the harassing and irritating circumstances of daily life, will inflict

Digitized by Google

pain, and even make the sounds of outward joy and gladness seem strange and discordant to us; but if we have learned the true secret disclosed to us in the text, they cannot rob us of a calm and restful spirit, or take from us that inward joy, which the sense of God's ever-present protection sheds abroad within us.

But, it will be asked, how are we to carry out the precept of casting our cares upon God,—what is meant by it? It means two things: Humble submission, and unwavering trust. If we would have God relieve us of the oppressive weight of our anxieties, we must submit humbly to His will, because it is His will. We may not too curiously search into the ways and methods of God's Providence, or fall to murmuring and impatience because His ways may appear strange to us. So long as everything goes smoothly with us, either in our natural or spiritual life, we think we acknowledge and realize the duty of submission to the Divine will; but when the time of trial comes, when cares and anxieties crowd upon us, when we are harassed by difficulties and untoward circumstances which may have come upon us apparently by no fault of our own; or when in our spiritual life we are impeded in our progress, and seem to be deprived of that means of grace once bestowed on us, and faults and infirmities once crushed seem to be regaining their hold upon us; in such seasons of trial as this it too often turns out that our sub-

Digitized by Google

mission, which we fancied had been implicit and entire, has been really made with reserves and conditions. And so, if we do not quickly gain the relief which we seek, if the trial lasts, our patience is quickly at an end, and pride begins to fret and to murmur.

No; if we would have our cares and anxieties sit lightly upon us, our submission must be without reserve and without condition, no time nor anything prescribed,—and then in due time God will raise us up, and in the meantime He will give us peace. You think, perhaps, that you are sinking, and that if help is deferred it must be too late. Yet He sees otherwise; He can let thee sink yet lower, and yet bring thee up again: He does but stay till the most fit time. "God waiteth to be gracious," and shall not we also be willing to wait?

The care of duty or of trials, however harassing and perplexing, thus carried, is sweet and light, because it is united and gathered in God, and rests there, and walks in His hand all the way. He bears the weight of all our duties and trials, and we are at peace because He ordains them for us. If you would shake off the yoke of submission and obedience, you will surely likewise be shaken off yourself; but if in humble diligence in the ways of God you walk on in His strength, there is nothing that concerns you, but

Digitized by Google

He will take the charge and care of it, of yourself, and all your interests. Are you troubled with fear? untrouble yourself, for He is with you; He hath promised to "lead thee in a straight and safe path." Does your weakness discourage you? hath He not engaged for that also? so lay that care upon Him; for has He not spoken of "strengthening the weak hands and feeble knees, and that the lame shall leap as an hart?" and though your own imperfections cast you down, and the holiness you long for appears more distant than ever, yet is there not in Him for you "righteousness and strength?" and when you are weak and feeble, and losing your way in the gloom of spiritual sadness, is He not with you, to feed His flock like a shepherd, and ready to carry the feeblest in His arms?

But once more, there is need not only of submission, but of unwavering faith, that we may carry out the precept in the text, of casting our cares upon God. We must believe in our hearts that which the Apostle declares,—that God careth for us. To believe that there is a great and powerful Being far away from us, who gave the impulse to creation, and ordained the laws by which all things have their appointed course, but that, having once set the world in order, He has ceased to interfere with the concerns of men,—to believe this may satisfy us as to how the world and its inhabitants came into existence, but it supplies us with no theory by which

Digitized by Google

we can understand or give a meaning to the history of mankind, and still less does it supply any key to the trials and sorrows of our own lives, or point to any resting-place amid the confusions that surround us.

No; if we would "cast our burden upon the Lord," we must cling to the belief which the Bible sets before us clearly and distinctly; we must believe that all things not only were created, but are managed and ruled by God in highest power and perfect wisdom; and that there is no breaking of His purposes, nor resisting of His power. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." And then we must go on to believe that He is exercising a gracious providence over all His people, and that as He has foreknown us from all eternity, so He has ordered all the circumstances and trials of our lives for our true advantage; leaving us free in all our choices, but yet making all different lines and ways converge to our highest good,—all to meet in *that*, however opposite they might appear. And then, if such be our faith in God as a person revealed to us in Christ, and in His constant care and protection as an all-powerful and loving Father, then—whilst others are turmoiling and wrestling, each with his projects, his cares, and burdens for himself, and at length crushed and sinking under them—we shall go free as the children of our Father from the pressure

Digitized by Google

of all that concerns us, for it will be laid even upon our God. Take from us the thought of God as an ever-present, all-powerful, and watchful Father; take from us the thought of Christ as the Divine Son, revealing to us the Divine perfections, and bringing us near to the source of all power by uniting us to Himself; take from us the thought of the Holy Ghost as an ever-present Comforter, witnessing to God's nearness to us,—and all is darkness and confusion, and amid the troubles of life we are ready to despair. But let us accept the truth in all its fulness and simplicity with regard to the Divine Personality of the Godhead,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the Scriptures have declared it and the Church has received it; let us believe firmly that God the Father cares for, and watches over, all His people, and that His Providence abandons none even in the extremest need; that God the Son has suffered in our nature, that He might teach us to suffer, and render our sufferings, for His merit's sake, acceptable to His Father, and an instrument of our sanctification; and further, that God the Holy Ghost is ever ready to comfort us and minister rest to our souls: —and then no cares or sorrows can cast us down, because we can raise our eyes to heaven, and behold there the God of all consolation. In Him we find our true rest and peace, for He alone knows the inward griefs and sorrows of our

Digitized by Google

hearts, and He alone is able, in His own good time, not only to relieve us of the burden of our cares, but to turn our sorrow into joy. Then shall our hearts rejoice, and that joy no man shall take from us.

Printed by James Parker and Co., Crown Yard, Oxford.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

# A SELECTION
FROM
# THE PUBLICATIONS
OF
# MESSRS. JAS. PARKER AND CO.
BROAD-STREET, OXFORD,
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

## NEW BOOKS.

### Words of Counsel on some of the Chief Difficulties of the Day,

Bequeathed to the Church in the Writings of SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, late Lord Bishop of Winchester. Collected and Arranged by the late THOMAS VINCENT FOSBERY, M.A., Hon. Chaplain to the Bishop, sometime Vicar of St. Giles's, Reading. Second Edition, Crown 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

### The Annals of England:

AN EPITOME OF ENGLISH HISTORY, from Contemporary Writers, the Rolls of Parliament, and other Public Records. A LIBRARY EDITION, revised and enlarged, with additional Woodcuts. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

### The Glossary of Architecture Abridged.

A CONCISE GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN GRECIAN, ROMAN, ITALIAN, AND GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE. By JOHN HENRY PARKER, C.B., M.A., F.S.A. A New Edition, revised. Fcap. 8vo., with nearly 500 Illustrations, in ornamental cloth, 7s. 6d.

### The Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical of the Church of England,

Referred to their Original Sources, and Illustrated with Explanatory Notes, by MACKENZIE E. C. WALCOTT, B.D., F.S.A., Præcentor and Prebendary of Chichester. Fcap. 8vo., cl., 4s.

### Godet's Biblical Studies

ON THE OLD TESTAMENT. Edited by the Hon. and Rev. W. H. LYTTELTON, Rector of Hagley, and Honorary Canon of Worcester. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, price 6s.

### Parables and Meditations

For Sundays and Holy Days. Translated from the German by A. GURNEY. Post 8vo., toned paper, cloth, 6s.

### Apollos; or, The Way of God.

A Plea for the Religion of Scripture. By A. CLEVELAND COXE, Bishop of Western New York. Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s.

---

JAMES PARKER AND CO., OXFORD AND LONDON.
776.1*.25

Digitized by Google

## The Apostolical Age.

SERMONS AND ESSAYS ON THE APOSTOLICAL AGE. By ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, D.D., Dean of Westminster, and Corresponding Member of the Institute of France. Third Edition, revised, Crown 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

## The Trinity of Man,

By THOMAS BOYS; with a Note by Rev. C. W. FURSE, M.A. 16mo., cloth, 4s. 6d.

## Words at Communion-time.

Short Sermons preached at Celebrations of Holy Communion. By WALTER FRANCIS ELGIE, M.A., Curate in Charge of Otterbourne, Hants. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

## Letters of Spiritual Counsel and Guidance.

By the late Rev. J. KEBLE, M.A., Vicar of Hursley. Edited, with a New Preface, by R. F. WILSON, M.A., Vicar of Rownhams, &c. Third Edition, much enlarged, Post 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## The First Prayer-book of Edward VI.

With a Correlation of the Subsequent Editions, shewing at One View the Results of the Various Revisions from 1549 to 1662. Crown 8vo. [*Nearly ready.*

## English Country Houses.

SIXTY-ONE VIEWS AND PLANS of recently erected Mansions, Private Residences, Parsonage-Houses, Farm-Houses, Lodges, and Cottages; with Sketches of Furniture and Fittings: and A Practical Treatise on House-Building. By WILLIAM WILKINSON, Architect, Oxford. Second Edition, Royal 8vo., Ornamental Cloth, £1 5s.

## The Gospel according to S. John.

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. JOHN. By S. CYRIL, Archbishop of Alexandria. Vol. I. S. John i.—viii. With a NOTICE by the Rev. Dr. PUSEY, on the Belief in the Double Procession of the Eastern Church in Earlier Times. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

## Sunday-school Exercises,

Collected and Revised from Manuscripts of Burghclere School-children, under the teaching of the Rev. W. B. BARTER, late Rector of Highclere and Burghclere; Edited by his Son-in-law, the BISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS. Second Edition, Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s.

## The late Mr. Haddan.

THE REMAINS of the late ARTHUR WEST HADDAN, B.D., Rector of Barton-on-the-Heath. Edited, with an Introduction, by the late Right Rev. A. P. FORBES, D.C.L., Bishop of Brechin. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

## The Exile from Paradise.

Translated by the Author of the "Life of S. Teresa." Fcap., cloth, 1s. 6d.



Digitized by Google

## Daniel the Prophet.

Nine Lectures delivered in the Divinity School, Oxford. With a Short Preface in Answer to Dr. Rowland Williams. By E. B. PUSEY, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, and Canon of Christ Church. *Seventh Thousand.* 8vo., 10s. 6d.

## The Minor Prophets;

With a Commentary Explanatory and Practical, and Introductions to the Several Books. By E. B. PUSEY, D.D. 4to., *sewed*, Six Parts, 5s. each.

Part I. contains HOSEA—JOEL, INTRODUCTION.
Part II. JOEL, INTRODUCTION—AMOS vi. 6.
Part III. AMOS vi. 6 to end—OBADIAH—JONAH—MICAH i. 12.
Part IV. MICAH i. 13 to NAHUM, end.
Part V. HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI ii. 21.
Part VI. is in a forward state.

## The Prophecies of Isaiah.

Their Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation Vindicated, in a Course of Sermons preached before the University of Oxford. By the Very Rev. R. PAYNE SMITH, D.D., Dean of Canterbury. 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.

## A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms

(Prayer-book Version), chiefly grounded on the Fathers. For the Use of Families. 2 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.

## The Psalter and the Gospel.

The Life, Sufferings, and Triumph of our Blessed Lord, revealed in the Book of Psalms. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s.

## A Summary of the Evidences for the Bible.

By the Rev. T. S. ACKLAND, M.A., late Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge; Incumbent of Pollington cum Balne, Yorkshire. 24mo., cloth, 3s.

## The Student's Manual of Scripture Names,

In Alphabetical Order; with Scripture References, and Short Historical Notices. For the Use of Schools, and Students preparing for Public Examinations. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s.



Digitized by Google

## Catena Aurea.

A Commentary on the Four Gospels, collected out of the Works of the Fathers by S. THOMAS AQUINAS. Uniform with the Library of the Fathers. A Re-issue, complete in 6 vols., cloth, £2 2s.

## A Plain Commentary on the Four Holy Gospels,

Intended chiefly for Devotional Reading. By the Very Rev. J. W. BURGON, B.D., Dean of Chichester. New Edition. 5 vols., Fcap. 8vo., limp cloth, £1 1s.

## The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark

Vindicated against Recent Critical Objectors and Established, by the Very Rev. J. W. BURGON, B.D., Dean of Chichester. With Facsimiles of Codex ℵ and Codex L. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

## The Gospels from a Rabbinical Point of View,

Shewing the perfect Harmony of the Four Evangelists on the subject of our Lord's Last Supper, and the Bearing of the Laws and Customs of the Jews at the time of our Lord's coming on the Language of the Gospels. By the Rev. G. WILDON PIERITZ, M.A. Crown 8vo., limp cloth, 3s.

## Christianity as Taught by S. Paul.

By WILLIAM J. IRONS, D.D., of Queen's College, Oxford; Prebendary of S. Paul's; being the BAMPTON LECTURES for the Year 1870, with an Appendix of the CONTINUOUS SENSE of S. Paul's Epistles; with Notes and Metalegomena, 8vo., with Map, Second Edition, with New Preface, cloth, 9s.

## S. Paul's Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians.

A Practical and Exegetical Commentary. Edited by the late Rev. HENRY NEWLAND. 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

## Reflections in a Lent Reading of the Epistle to the Romans.

By the late Rev. C. MARRIOTT. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s.

---

JAMES PARKER AND CO.,

Digitized by Google

## A History of the Church,

From the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313, to the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. By WILLIAM BRIGHT, D.D., Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. Second Edition. Post 8vo., 10s. 6d.

## The Age of the Martyrs;

Or, The First Three Centuries of the Work of the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By JOHN DAVID JENKINS, B.D., Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford; Canon of Pieter Maritzburg. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## The Councils of the Church,

From the Council of Jerusalem, A.D. 51, to the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381; chiefly as to their Constitution, but also as to their Objects and History. By E. B. PUSEY, D.D. 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.

## The Ecclesiastical History of the First Three Centuries,

From the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ to the year 313. By the late Rev. Dr. BURTON. Fourth Edition. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

## A Brief History of the Christian Church,

From the First Century to the Reformation. By the Rev. J. S. BARTLETT. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

## Ordinum Sacrorum in Ecclesia Anglicana Defensio,

Unacum Statutis, Documentis, et Testimoniis ordinum Anglicanorum valorem probantibus; et Registro Consecrationis Archiepiscopi Parkeri, in Bibliotheca Lambethæ Asservato, Photozincographice expresso. Editore T. J. BAILEY, B.A. Large Folio, cloth, £1 10s.

## The Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrifice and Participation of the Holy Eucharist.

By GEORGE TREVOR, M.A., D.D., Canon of York; Rector of Beeford. Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged. Crown 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.



Digitized by Google

## Manual of Ecclesiastical History,

From the First to the Twelfth Century inclusive. By the Rev. E. S. FFOULKES, M.A. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## History of the so-called Jansenist Church of Holland;

With a Sketch of its Earlier Annals, and some Account of the Brothers of the Common Life. By the late Rev. J. M. NEALE, Warden of Sackville College. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

## A History of the English Church,

From its Foundation to the Reign of Queen Mary. By MARY CHARLOTTE STAPLEY. Third Edition, revised, with a Recommendatory Notice by DEAN HOOK. Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s.

## Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation.

A New Translation by the Rev. L. GIDLEY, M.A., Chaplain of St. Nicholas', Salisbury. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## Peter the Apostle never at Rome,

Shewn to be a Historical Fact: with a Dissertation of the Apostolic Authority of the Symbol (or Creed) of the Church. By J. H. BROWN, M.A. Post 8vo., limp cloth, 2s. 6d.

## Scotland and the Scottish Church.

By the Rev. H. CASWALL, M.A., Author of "America and the American Church," &c. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

## The Sufferings of the Clergy during the Great Rebellion.

By the Rev. JOHN WALKER, M.A. Epitomised by the Author of "The Annals of England." Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

---



Digitized by Google

## The Principles of Divine Service;

Or, An Inquiry concerning the True Manner of Understanding and Using the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer, and for the Administration of the Holy Communion in the English Church. By the Ven. PHILIP FREEMAN, M.A., Vicar of Thorverton, Archdeacon of Exeter, &c. 2 vols. 8vo., cl., 16s.

## A History of the Book of Common Prayer,

And other Authorized Books, from the Reformation; with an Account of the State of Religion in England from 1640 to 1660. By the Rev. THOMAS LATHBURY, M.A. Second Edition, with an Index. 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.

## Catechetical Lessons on the Book of Common Prayer.

Illustrating the Prayer-book, from its Title-page to the end of the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels. Designed to aid the Clergy in Public Catechising. By the Rev. Dr. FRANCIS HESSEY, Incumbent of St. Barnabas, Kensington, Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## A Short Explanation of the Nicene Creed,

For the Use of Persons beginning the Study of Theology. By the late A. P. FORBES, D.C.L., Bishop of Brechin. Second Edition, Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## An Explanation of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

By the late A. P. FORBES, D.C.L., Bishop of Brechin. With an Epistle Dedicatory to the Rev. E. B. PUSEY, D.D. Second Edition, in one vol., Post 8vo., 12s.

## Addresses to the Candidates for Ordination on the Questions in the Ordination Service.

By the late SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER. Fifth Thousand. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## A Commentary on the Epistles and Gospels in the Book of Common Prayer.

Extracted from Writings of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, anterior to the Division of the East and West. With an Introductory Notice by the DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S. In Four Parts. Part I. ADVENT—QUINQUAGESIMA. Crown 8vo., 3s.

——— Part II. ASH-WEDNESDAY to TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK. 4s. 6d.



Digitized by Google

## On Eucharistical Adoration.

With Considerations suggested by a Pastoral Letter on the Doctrine of the Most Holy Eucharist. By the late Rev. JOHN KEBLE, M.A., Vicar of Hursley. 24mo., sewed, 2s.

## Cur Deus Homo, or Why God was made Man;

By ST. ANSELM, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury. Translated into English, with an Introduction, &c. Second Edition, Fcap. 8vo., 2s. 6d.

## The Administration of the Holy Spirit

IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. The Bampton Lectures for 1868. By the Right Rev. the LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY. *Second Edition.* Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

## Sayings ascribed to our Lord

By the Fathers and other Primitive Writers, and Incidents in His Life narrated by them, otherwise than found in Scripture. By JOHN THEODORE DODD, B.A., late Junior Student of Christ Church. Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s.

**The Pastoral Rule of S. Gregory.**

Sancti Gregorii Papæ Regulæ Pastoralis Liber, ad JOHANNEM, Episcopum Civitatis Ravennæ. With an English Translation. By the Rev. H. R. BRAMLEY, M.A., Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Canons.**

The Definitions of the Catholic Faith and Canons of Discipline of the First Four General Councils of the Universal Church. In Greek and English. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE CANONS OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH. *See Catalogue, p. 3.*

**De Fide et Symbolo:**

Documenta quædam nec non Aliquorum SS. Patrum Tractatus. Edidit CAROLUS A. HEURTLEY, S.T.P., Dom. Margaretæ Prælector, et Ædis Christi Canonicus. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 4s. 6d.

**Analecta Christiana,**

In usum Tironum. Edidit et Annotationibus illustravit C. MARRIOTT, S.T.B. 8vo., 10s. 6d.

**The Athanasian Creed.**

A Critical History of the Athanasian Creed, by the Rev. DANIEL WATERLAND, D.D. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

**St. Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria.**

The Three Epistles (ad Nestorium, ii., iii., et ad Joan Antioch). A Revised Text, with an old Latin Version and an English Translation. Edited by P. E. PUSEY, M.A. 8vo., in wrapper, 3s.

**S. Aurelius Augustinus,**
EPISCOPUS HIPPONENSIS,

De Catechizandis Rudibus, de Fide Rerum quæ non videntur, de Utilitate Credendi. In Usum Juniorum. Edidit C. MARRIOTT, S.T.B., olim Coll. Oriel. Socius. A New Edition, Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**The Nicene Creed.**

Defensio Fidei Nicænæ. A Defence of the Nicene Creed out of the extant writings of the Catholic Doctors who flourished during the three first centuries of the Christian Church. By GEORGE BULL, D.D., Lord Bishop of St. David's. A new Translation. 2 vols., 8vo., 10s.

**The Book of Ratramn**

The Priest and Monk of Corbey, commonly called Bertram, on the Body and Blood of the Lord. (Latin and English.) To which is added AN APPENDIX, containing the Saxon Homily of Ælfric. Fcap. 8vo. [*Nearly ready.*



Digitized by Google

# Works of the Standard English Divines,

## PUBLISHED IN THE LIBRARY OF ANGLO-CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

*At the following prices in Cloth.*

**Andrewes' (Bp.) Complete Works.** 11 vols., 8vo., £3 7s.
THE SERMONS. (Separate.) 5 vols., £1 15s.

**Beveridge's (Bp.) Complete Works.** 12 vols., 8vo., £4 4s.
THE ENGLISH THEOLOGICAL WORKS. 10 vols., £3 10s.

**Bramhall's (Abp.) Works, with Life and Letters, &c.** 5 vols., 8vo., £1 15s. (Vol. 2 cannot be sold separately.)

**Bull's (Bp.) Harmony on Justification.** 2 vols., 8vo., 10s.
——— **Defence of the Nicene Creed.** 2 vols., 10s.
——— **Judgment of the Catholic Church.** 5s.

**Cosin's (Bp.) Works Complete.** 5 vols., 8vo., £1 10s. (Vol. 1 cannot be sold separately.)

**Crakanthorp's Defensio Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.** 8vo., 7s.

**Frank's Sermons.** 2 vols., 8vo., 10s.

**Forbes' Considerationes Modestæ.** 2 vols., 8vo., 12s.

**Gunning's Paschal, or Lent Fast.** 8vo., 6s.

**Hammond's Practical Catechism.** 8vo., 5s.
——— **Miscellaneous Theological Works.** 5s.
——— **Thirty-one Sermons.** 2 Parts. 10s.

**Hickes's Two Treatises on the Christian Priesthood.** 3 vols., 8vo., 15s.

**Johnson's (John) Theological Works.** 2 vols., 8vo., 10s.
——— **English Canons.** 2 vols., 12s.

**Laud's (Abp.) Complete Works.** 7 vols., (9 Parts,) 8vo., £2 17s.

**L'Estrange's Alliance of Divine Offices.** 8vo., 6s.

**Marshall's Penitential Discipline.** (This volume cannot be sold separate from the complete set.)

**Nicholson's (Bp.) Exposition of the Catechism.** (This volume cannot be sold separate from the complete set.)

**Overall's (Bp.) Convocation-book of 1606.** 8vo., 5s.

**Pearson's (Bp.) Vindiciæ Epistolarum S. Ignatii.** 2 vols., 8vo., 10s.

**Thorndike's (Herbert) Theological Works Complete.** 6 vols., (10 Parts,) 8vo., £2 10s.

**Wilson's (Bp.) Works Complete.** With Life, by REV. J. KEBLE. 7 vols., (8 Parts,) 8vo., £3 3s.



Digitized by Google

### The Catechist's Manual;

With an Introduction by the late SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER. 5th Thousand. Cr. 8vo., limp cl., 5s.

### The Confirmation Class-book:

Notes for Lessons, with APPENDIX, containing Questions and Summaries for the Use of the Candidates. By EDWARD M. HOLMES, LL.B., Rector of Marsh Gibbon, Bucks, and Diocesan Inspector of Schools; Author of the "Catechist's Manual." Fcap. 8vo., limp cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE QUESTIONS, separate, 4 sets, in wrapper, 1s.

THE SUMMARIES, separate, 4 sets, in wrapper, 1s.

### The Church's Work in our Large Towns.

By GEORGE HUNTINGTON, M.A., Rector of Tenby, and Domestic Chaplain of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. Second Edit., revised and enlarged. Crown 8vo., cl. 6s.

### The Church and the School:

Containing Practical Hints on the Work of a Clergyman. By H. W. BELLAIRS, M.A., One of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. Cheap re-issue, Crown 8vo., limp cloth, 2s. 6d.

### Notes of Seven Years' Work in a Country Parish.

By R. F. WILSON, M.A., Prebendary of Sarum, and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Salisbury. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 4s.

### A Manual of Pastoral Visitation,

Intended for the Use of the Clergy in their Visitation of the Sick and Afflicted. By A PARISH PRIEST. Dedicated, by permission, to His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin. Second Edition, Crown 8vo., limp cloth, 3s. 6d.; roan, 4s.

### The Cure of Souls.

By the Rev. G. ARDEN, M.A., Rector of Winterborne-Came, and Author of "Breviates from Holy Scripture," &c. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

### Questions on the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels,

Throughout the Year. Edited by the Rev. T. L. CLAUGHTON, Vicar of Kidderminster. For the Use of Teachers in Sunday Schools. Fifth Edition, 18mo., cl. In two Parts, *each* 2s. 6d.

### Pleas for the Faith.

Especially designed for the use of Missionaries at Home and Abroad. By the Rev. W. SOMERVILLE LACH SZYRMA, M.A., St. Augustine's College, Canterbury. Fcap. 8vo., cl., 2s. 6d.



Digitized by Google

## MEDITATIONS FOR THE FORTY DAYS OF LENT.

With a Prefatory Notice by the ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN. 18mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

## DAILY STEPS TOWARDS HEAVEN.

A small pocket volume containing a few PRACTICAL THOUGHTS on the GOSPEL HISTORY, with Texts for Every Day in the Year. Thirty-eighth thousand. 32mo., roan, 2s. 6d.

## ANNUS DOMINI.

A Prayer for each Day of the Year, founded on a Text of Holy Scripture. By CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI. 32mo., cl., 3s. 6d.

## LITURGIA DOMESTICA:

Services for every Morning and Evening in the Week. Third Edition. 18mo., 2s. Or in two Parts, 1s. each.

## OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Four Books. By THOMAS A KEMPIS. Small 4to., printed on thick toned paper, with red border-lines, mediæval title-pages, ornamental initials, &c. Third Thousand. Cloth, 12s.

## DE IMITATIONE CHRISTI.

Thomas à Kempis De Imitatione Christi. Libri Quatuor. New Edition. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

## EVENING WORDS.

Brief Meditations on the Introductory Portion of Our Lord's Last Discourse with His Disciples. 16mo., cloth, 2s.

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST;

Or, Meditations on the Death and Passion of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour. Edited by the late WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D., F.R.S., Dean of Chichester. Cr. 8vo., cloth, price 3s. 6d.

## FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.

DEVOTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER HOLY COMMUNION. With Preface by J. KEBLE. Fifth Edition, in red and black, on toned paper, 32mo., cloth, 2s.

The above, with the Service, cloth, 2s. 6d.

DEVOUT COMMUNION, from HORST. 18mo., cloth, 1s.

OFFICIUM EUCHARISTICUM. By EDWARD LAKE, D.D. New Edition. 32mo., cloth, 1s. 6d.

A SHORT AND PLAIN INSTRUCTION FOR THE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. By BISHOP WILSON. 32mo., with Rubrics, cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

——————— 32mo., limp cloth, 8d.; sewed, 6d.

——————— 24mo., limp cloth, 1s.



Digitized by Google

# Oxford Editions of Devotional Works.

*Fcap. 8vo., chiefly printed in Red and Black, on Toned Paper.*

**Andrewes' Devotions.**

DEVOTIONS. By the Right Rev. LANCELOT ANDREWES. Translated from the Greek and Latin, and arranged anew. Cloth, 5s.

**The Imitation of Christ.**

FOUR BOOKS. By THOMAS A KEMPIS. A new Edition, revised. Cloth, 4s.

**Laud's Devotions.**

THE PRIVATE DEVOTIONS of Dr. WILLIAM LAUD, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Martyr. Antique cloth, 5s.

**Spinckes' Devotions.**

TRUE CHURCH OF ENGLAND MAN'S COMPANION IN THE CLOSET. By NATHANIEL SPINCKES. Floriated borders, antique cloth, 4s.

**Sutton's Meditations.**

GODLY MEDITATIONS UPON THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. By CHRISTOPHER SUTTON, D.D., late Prebend of Westminster. A new Edition. Antique cloth, 5s.

**Taylor's Golden Grove.**

THE GOLDEN GROVE: A Choice Manual, containing what is to be Believed, Practised, and Desired or Prayed for. By BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR. Antique cloth, 3s. 6d.

**Taylor's Holy Living.**

THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY LIVING. By BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR. Ant. cloth, 4s.

**Taylor's Holy Dying.**

THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY DYING. By BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR. Ant. cloth, 4s.

**Wilson's Sacra Privata.**

THE PRIVATE MEDITATIONS, DEVOTIONS, and PRAYERS of the Right Rev. T. WILSON, D.D., Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man. Now first printed entire. Cloth, 4s.

**Ancient Collects.**

ANCIENT COLLECTS AND OTHER PRAYERS, Selected for Devotional Use from various Rituals, with an Appendix on the Collects in the Prayer-book. By WILLIAM BRIGHT, D.D. Fourth Edition. Antique cloth, 5s.

**Devout Communicant.**

THE DEVOUT COMMUNICANT, exemplified in his Behaviour before, at, and after the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Practically suited to all the Parts of that Solemn Ordinance. 7th Edition, revised. Edited by Rev. G. MOULTRIE. Fcap. 8vo., toned paper, red lines, ant. cl., 4s.

**ΕΙΚΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ.**

THE PORTRAITURE OF HIS SACRED MAJESTY KING CHARLES I. in his Solitudes and Sufferings. Cloth, 5s.



Digitized by Google

## THE AUTHORIZED EDITIONS OF

# THE CHRISTIAN YEAR,

### With the Author's latest Corrections and Additions.

NOTICE.—Messrs. PARKER are the sole Publishers of the Editions of the "Christian Year" issued with the sanction and under the direction of the Author's representatives. All Editions without their imprint are unauthorized.

| SMALL 4to. EDITION. | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|
| Handsomely printed on toned paper, with red border lines and initial letters. Cl. extra | 10 | 6 |
| DEMY 8vo. EDITION. | | |
| Cloth | 6 | 0 |
| FOOLSCAP 8vo. EDITION. | | |
| Cloth | 3 | 6 |
| 24mo. EDITION. | | |
| Cloth | 2 | 0 |
| Ditto, with red lines | 2 | 6 |
| 32mo. EDITION. | | |
| Cloth, limp | 1 | 0 |
| Cloth boards, gilt edges | 1 | 6 |
| 48mo. EDITION. | | |
| Cloth, limp | 0 | 6 |
| Cloth boards | 0 | 9 |
| Roan | 1 | 6 |
| FACSIMILE OF THE 1st EDITION, with a list of the variations from the Original Text which the Author made in later Editions. 2 vols., 12mo., boards | 7 | 6 |

*The above Editions (except the Facsimile of the First Edition) are kept in a variety of bindings, the chief of which are Morocco plain, Morocco Antique, Calf Antique, and Vellum.*

*By the same Author.*

LYRA INNOCENTIUM. Thoughts in Verse on Christian Children. *Thirteenth Edition.* Fcap. 8vo., cl., 5s.

———— 48mo. edition, limp cloth, 6d.; cloth boards, 1s.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS BY THE REV. JOHN KEBLE, M.A., Vicar of Hursley. *Third Edition.* Fcap., cloth, 6s.

THE PSALTER, OR PSALMS OF DAVID: In English Verse. *Fourth Edition.* Fcap., cloth, 6s.

The above may also be had in various bindings.

---

**By the late Rev. ISAAC WILLIAMS.**

THE CATHEDRAL; or, The Catholic and Apostolic Church in England. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.; 32mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE BAPTISTERY; or, The Way of Eternal Life, with Plates by BOETIUS A BOLSWERT. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.; 32mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

HYMNS translated from the PARISIAN BREVIARY. 32mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR. Fcap. 8vo., cl., 5s.; 32mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS. 32mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE SEVEN DAYS; or, The Old and New Creation. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

---



Digitized by Google

## THE LATE BISHOP WILBERFORCE.

Sermons preached before the University of Oxford: Second Series, from 1847 to 1862. By the late SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER. 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.

——— THIRD SERIES, from 1863 to 1870. 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

## REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS. Vol. I. From Advent to Whitsuntide. Seventh Edition. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS. Vol. II. Sixth Edition. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS. Vol. III. Reprinted from the "Plain Sermons by Contributors to the 'Tracts for the Times.'" Revised Edition, 8vo., cloth, 6s.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS preached and printed on Various Occasions. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

SERMONS preached before the University of Oxford, between A.D. 1859 and 1872. 8vo., clotb, 6s.

LENTEN SERMONS, preached chiefly to Young Men at the Universities, between A.D. 1858—1874. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

ELEVEN SHORT ADDRESSES during a Retreat of the Companions of the Love of Jesus, engaged in Perpetual Intercession for the Conversion of Sinners. 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

## THE LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY.

SERMONS ON THE BEATITUDES, with others mostly preached before the University of Oxford; to which is added a Preface relating to the volume of "Essays and Reviews." New Edition. Crown 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

## REV. J. KEBLE.

SERMONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR. By the Rev. JOHN KEBLE, Author of "The Christian Year."

1. ADVENT TO CHRISTMAS EVE. 8vo., cloth, 6s.
2. CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY. 8vo., cloth, 6s.
3. LENT TO PASSIONTIDE. 8vo., cloth, 6s.
4. HOLY WEEK. 8vo., cloth, 6s.
5. EASTER TO ASCENSION-DAY. 8vo., cloth, 6s.
6. ASCENSION-DAY TO TRINITY SUNDAY. 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*There remain, to follow at intervals,*

7, 8. SERMONS FOR THE TRINITY SEASON. Two or more Volumes, 8vo., cloth, 6s. each.

9. SERMONS FOR SAINTS' DAYS, which are being selected, 8vo., cloth, 6s.

VILLAGE SERMONS ON THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

SERMONS, OCCASIONAL AND PAROCHIAL. 8vo., cloth, 12s.

## REV. H. HARRIS, B.D.

THE TWO BLASPHEMIES. Five Sermons on The Blasphemy against the Son of Man, and The Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: preached before the University of Oxford, by HENRY HARRIS, B.D., Rector of Winterbourne Basset. Crown 8vo., limp cloth, 3s. 6d.



Digitized by Google

## TWENTY SHORT ALLEGORICAL SERMONS.

By WALTER A. GRAY, M.A. (Π.), Vicar of Arksey;—and B. KERR PEARSE, M.A. (Φ.), Rector of Ascot Heath.

CONTENTS:—The City of the Lost; The Prisoner of Hope; The Soldier; The Hounds; The Slaves; The Stone of Separation; The Stranger; The Unnatural Sentence; The Guest-chamber; The Exile; The Three Fields; The Hidden Power; The Monster; The House; Summer and Winter; The Bride; The Ruin Rebuilt; The Passers-by; The Cloud; The Shadow. Fourth Edition, Fcap. 8vo., toned paper, cloth, 2s. 6d.

## REV. E. MONRO.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH. Eight Plain Sermons:—Abel; Enoch; Noah; Abraham; Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; Moses; The Walls of Jericho; Conclusions. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

Plain Sermons on the Book of Common Prayer. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

Historical and Practical Sermons on the Sufferings and Resurrection of our Lord. 2 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 10s.

Sermons on New Testament Characters. Fcap. 8vo., 4s.

## LENTEN SERMONS AT OXFORD.

The Series for 1859. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.
For 1863. 8vo., cl., 7s. 6d.
For 1866. 8vo., cl., 7s. 6d.
For 1867. 8vo., cl., 7s. 6d.
For 1868. 8vo., cl., 5s.
For 1869. 8vo., cl., 7s. 6d.

## SHORT SERMONS FOR FAMILY READING,

Following the Course of the Christian Seasons. First Series. By the Very Rev. J. W. BURGON, B.D., Dean of Chichester. 2 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 8s. SECOND SERIES. 2 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 8s.

## RT. REV. J. ARMSTRONG, D.D.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS. By the late Lord Bishop of Grahamstown. Fifth Edition. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

SERMONS on the Fasts and Festivals. Third Edition. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 5s.

## SERMONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN SEASONS.

SERMONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN SEASONS. First Series. Edited by JOHN ARMSTRONG, D.D., late Lord Bishop of Grahamstown. 4 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 16s.

——— Second Series. Edited by the Rev. JOHN BARROW, D.D., late Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. 4 vols., Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 16s.



Digitized by Google

A SERIES OF

# TALES ILLUSTRATING CHURCH HISTORY.

**Each of the following separately. Price One Shilling.**

I. The CAVE in the HILLS; or, Cæcilius Viriathus.
II. The EXILES of the CEBENNA.
III. The CHIEF'S DAUGHTER.
IV. The LILY of TIFLIS.
V. WILD SCENES AMONGST THE CELTS.
VI. The LAZAR-HOUSE of LEROS.
VII. The RIVALS: a Tale of the Anglo-Saxon Church.
VIII. The CONVERT of MASSACHUSETTS.
IX. The QUAY of the DIOSCURI: a Tale of Nicene Times.
X. The BLACK DANES.
XI. The CONVERSION of ST. VLADIMIR.
XII. The SEA-TIGERS: a Tale of Mediæval Nestorianism.
XIII. The CROSS in SWEDEN.
XIV. The ALLELUIA BATTLE; or, Pelagianism in Britain.
XV. The BRIDE of RAMCUTTAH.
XVI. ALICE of FOBBING.
XVII. The NORTHERN LIGHT.
XVIII. AUBREY DE L'ORNE; or, The Times of St. Anselm.
XIX. LUCIA'S MARRIAGE.
XX. WOLFINGHAM.
XXI. THE FORSAKEN; or, The Times of St. Dunstan.
XXII. THE DOVE OF TABENNA; and THE RESCUE.
XXIII. LARACHE: a Tale of the Portuguese Church.
XXIV. WALTER THE ARMOURER; or, The Interdict.
XXV. THE CATECHUMENS of the COROMANDEL COAST.
XXVI. THE DAUGHTERS OF POLA.
XXVII. AGNES MARTIN; or, The Fall of Wolsey.
XXVIII. ROSE AND MINNIE; or, The Loyalists.
XXIX. DORES DE GUALDIM; a Tale of the Portuguese Revolution of 1640.

*Or in Volumes, cloth, lettered, 5s. each.*

Vol. I. ENGLAND, vol. i. contains Nos. 1, 5, 7, 10 and 14.
Vol. II. ENGLAND, vol. ii. contains Nos. 16, 18, 21, 24 and 27.
Vol. III. AMERICA AND OUR COLONIES, contains Nos. 3, 8, 20, 25 and 28.
Vol. IV. FRANCE AND SPAIN, contains Nos. 2, 22, 23 and 29.
Vol. V. EASTERN AND NORTHERN EUROPE, contains Nos. 6, 11, 13, 17 and 26.
Vol. VI. ASIA AND AFRICA, contains Nos. 4, 9, 12, 15 and 19.

JAMES PARKER AND CO., OXFORD AND LONDON.


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google